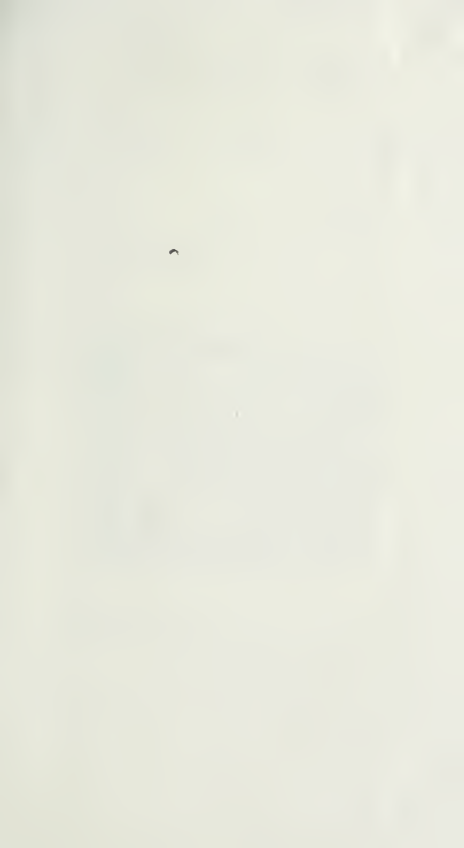


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SACRED DRAMAS.

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For Young Persons.

THE SUBJECTS TAKEN FROM THE BIBLE.

BY HANNAH MORE.



A New Edition.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

From the Chiswick Press,


BY C. WHITTINGHAM.

SOLD BY R. JENNINGS, POULTRY, LONDON.

1818.

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MEMOIRS

OF

MRS. HANNAH MORE.

THIS lady, who has so highly distinguished herself by her literary productions, was born, we believe, at Hanham, a village near Bristol; in which latter place she for several years kept a boarding-school for young ladies.

Her first publication was a pastoral drama, called "The Search after Happiness," which appeared in 1773. It was written at the age of eighteen, for some female friends, who performed the several characters in private parties. Though the plot of this little piece is perfectly inartificial, the poetry which it contains does infinite credit to the powers of such early years, and it experienced a very favourable reception. Indeed, few pastorals, in this or any other language, are better calculated to refine the female taste, repress the luxuriance of juvenile imaginations, or charm the rising affections

of minds glowing with sensibility and ardour. But its chief distinctions over every similar drama are, its purity of sentiment, simplicity of diction, originality of design, and the inviolable affinity which it establishes and preserves between truth and nature, virtue and happiness, habits of innocence, and the practice of piety.

The concern that she took, and the interest which she felt, in the dignity of her own sex, were afterwards exemplified by a Series of "Essays on various Subjects, principally designed for young Ladies."

In the year 1774, Mrs. More published "The Inflexible Captive," a Tragedy, founded on the story of Regulus: its literary merits are great, and it was once acted on the Bath stage.

"Sir Eldred of the Bower," and "The Bleeding Rock," two charming legendary tales, were published together in 4to, 1776. The latter is in the manner of Ovid; and the pretty fiction at the conclusion had its origin from a rock, near the author's residence in Somersetshire, whence a crimson stream flows, occasioned by the red strata over which the water makes its way from the mountains.

Mrs. More has also written "An Ode to Dragon," Mr. Garrick's house-dog; "Percy," a Tragedy, founded on the Gabrielle de Vergy of M. de Belloy; "The Fatal Falsehood," a Tragedy; "Sacred Dramas*," chiefly intended for young Persons—the subjects taken from the Bible; "Sensibility," a Poem; "Florio," and "The Bas Bleu," two Poems; "Slavery," a Poem; and "Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont, made in the National Convention of France, on the Subjects of Religion and Public Education." In this work she exposed the gross atheistical tendency of the speech of M. Dupont, and roused the general abhorrence of all ranks at the atrocity of a system which struck at the vitals of every thing good and sacred among men. The profits of the book were appropriated toward the relief of the French emigrant clergy.

After this latter work, Mrs. More projected a "Cheap Repository," for supplying intelligence of an opposite tendency, to such as could not afford it on other terms. The fund by which she reared, and for a long time maintained, this impregnable fortress against the havock of irreligion and licentiousness, originated in the munificence of the liberal circle to which she had access by her personal merits and address.

* Moses in the Bulrushes—David and Goliath—Belshazzar—and Daniel.

Her "Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society," and her "Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World," were very popular with all orders in the community. In short, such was the impression which they made, that scarcely any other book was for a long time read in private families, or mentioned in polite conversation; nay, its arguments were even detailed from the pulpits in the vicinity of the court.

Mrs. More has since given to the world, "Practical Piety; or, the Influence of the Religion of the Heart on the Conduct of the Life;" "Christian Morals;" "Hints towards forming the Character of a Young Princess;" "Strictures on Female Education;" "Cœlebs in Search of a Wife;" and "An Essay on the Character and Practical Writings of St. Paul."

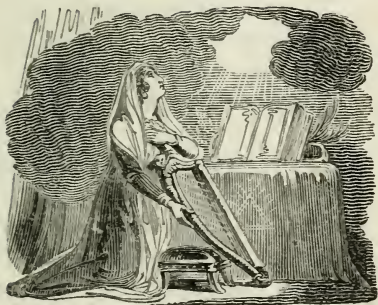
Her works, in general, are calculated to awaken the world to its best interest, and excite it to praiseworthy actions; and she uses for this laudable purpose the gentle means of reason and persuasion. She would lead her fellow-creatures into habits of mutual forbearance and kind accommodation with each other, not drive them into those of harshness and aversion; she would fill their heads with knowledge, that their hearts may not be blinded by pas-

sion; she would inspire them with principles of integrity, and a sense of what is just and right, that their duty may be an object of choice, not compulsion. We understand, that her publications are an exact transcript of her own life, which is literally spent in doing good. Some of her friends (says the Editor of the "*Biographia Dramatica*," edit. 1812), called her exquisite humanity her hobby-horse; and to such of them as were wits, it furnished a new species of raillery. It is in this humour, which is a mixture of praise and blame, that the late Lord Orford, in a letter to herself, gives the following sketch of her character:

"It is very provoking (says his Lordship), that people must be always hanging or drowning themselves, or going mad, that you, forsooth, mistress, may have the diversion of exercising your pity, and good-nature, and charity, and intercession, and all that bead-roll of virtues that make you so troublesome and amiable, when you might be ten times more agreeable, by writing things that would not cost one above half-a-crown at a time. You are an absolute walking hospital, and travel about into lone and bye places, with your doors open to house stray-casualties. I wish, at least, that you would have some children yourself, that you might not be plaguing one for all the pretty brats that are starying and friendless. I suppose it was some such

goody, two or three thousand years ago, that suggested the idea of an alma-mater suckling the three hundred and sixty-five bantlings of the Countess of Hainault.—Well, as your newly-adopted pensioners have two babes, I insist on your accepting two guineas for them, instead of one, at present; that is, when you shall be present. If you cannot circumscribe your own charities, you shall not stint mine, Madam, who can afford it much better, and who must be dunned for alms, and do not scramble over hedges and ditches in searching for opportunities of flinging away my money on good works. I employ mine better at auctions, and in buying *pictures and baubles, and hoarding curiosities*, that, in truth, I cannot keep long, but that will last for ever in my catalogue, and make me immortal. Alas! will they cover a multitude of sins? Adieu! I cannot jest after that sentence.”

SACRED DRAMAS.



All the Books of the Bible are either most admirable and exalted Pieces of Poetry, or are the best Materials in the world for it.

Cowley.

TO HER GRACE

THE DUCHESS OF BEAUFORT,

THESE SACRED DRAMAS

ARE, WITH THE MOST PERFECT RESPECT,

INSCRIBED :

AS, AMONG THE MANY AMIABLE

AND DISTINGUISHED QUALITIES

WHICH ADORN HER MIND,

AND ADD LUSTRE TO HER RANK,

HER

EXCELLENCE IN THE MATERNAL CHARACTER

GIVES A PECULIAR PROPRIETY

TO HER PROTECTION OF THIS LITTLE WORK ;

WRITTEN WITH AN HUMBLE WISH

TO PROMOTE THE LOVE OF PIETY AND VIRTUE

IN YOUNG PERSONS,

BY HER GRACE'S

MOST OBEDIENT,

MOST OBLIGED,

AND MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

HANNAH MORE.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

I AM as ready as the most rigid critic to confess, that nothing can be more simple and inartificial than the plans of the following Dramas. In the construction of them I have seldom ventured to introduce any persons* of my own creation: still less did I imagine myself at liberty to invent circumstances. I reflected with awe, that *the place whereon I stood was holy ground*. All the latitude I permitted myself was, to make such persons as I selected act under such circumstances as I found, and express

* Never, indeed, except in DANIEL, and that of necessity; as the Bible furnishes no more than two persons, Daniel and Darius; and these were not sufficient to carry on the business of the piece.

such sentiments as, in my humble judgment, appeared not unnatural to their characters and situations.—Some of the speeches are so long as to retard the action; for I rather aspired after moral instruction than the purity of dramatic composition. I am aware that it may be brought as an objection, that I have now and then made my Jewish characters speak too much like Christians, as it may be questioned whether I have not occasionally ascribed to them a degree of light and knowledge greater than they probably had the means of possessing; but I was more anxious in consulting the advantage of my youthful readers, by leading them on to higher religious views, than in securing to myself the reputation of critical exactness.

It will be thought that I have chosen, perhaps, the least important passage in the eventful life of David, for the foundation of the Drama which bears his name. Yet, even in this his first exploit, the sacred

historian represents him as exhibiting no mean lesson of modesty, humility, courage, and piety. Many will think that the introduction of Saul's daughter would have added to the effect of the piece: and I have no doubt but that it would have made the intrigue more complicated and amusing had this Drama been intended for the stage. There, all that is tender, and all that is terrible in the passions, find a proper place. But I write for the young, in whom it will be always time enough to have the passions awakened: I write for a class of readers, to whom it is not easy to accommodate one's subject*, so as to be at once useful and interesting.

* It would not be easy, nor perhaps proper, to introduce sacred tragedies on the English stage. The pious would think it profane, while the profane would think it dull. Yet the excellent RACINE, in a profligate country, and a voluptuous court, ventured to adapt the story of *Athalie* to the French theatre; and it remains to us a glorious monument of its author's courageous piety, while it exhibits the perfection of the dramatic art.

The amiable poet* from whom I have taken my motto, after showing the superiority of the sacred over the profane histories, some instances of which I have noticed in my introduction, concludes with the following remark, which I may apply to myself with far more propriety than it was used by the author:—"I am far from assuming to myself to have fulfilled the duty of this weighty undertaking; and I shall be ambitious of no other fruit from this weak and imperfect attempt of mine, but the opening of a way to the courage and industry of some other persons, who may be better able to perform it thoroughly and successfully."

* COWLEY.

INTRODUCTION.



OH for the sacred energy which struck
The harp of Jesse's son! or for a spark
Of that celestial flame which touch'd the lips
Of bless'd Isaiah*: when the Seraphim
With living fire descended, and his soul
From sin's pollution purg'd! or one faint ray,
If human things to heav'nly I may join,
Of that pure spirit which inflam'd the breast
Of Milton, God's own poet! when, retir'd
In fair enthusiastic vision rapt,
The *nightly visitant* deign'd bless his couch
With inspiration, such as never flow'd
From Acidale or Aganippe's fount!
Then, when the sacred fire within him burnt,
He spake as man or angel might have spoke,
When man was pure, and angels were his guests.

It will not be.—Nor prophets burning zeal,
Nor muse of fire, nor yet to sweep the strings
With sacred energy, to me belongs;
Nor with Miltonic hand to touch the chords
That wake to ecstasy. From me, alas!
The secret source of harmony is hid;
The magic powers which catch the ravish'd soul

* Isaiah vi.

In melody's sweet maze, and the clear streams
Which to pure Fancy's yet untasted springs
Enchanted lead. Of these I little know!
Yet, all unknowing, dare thy aid invoke,
SPIRIT OF TRUTH! to bless these worthless lays:
Nor impious is the hope; for thou hast said,
That none who ask in faith should ask in vain.

You I invoke not now, ye fabled Nine!
I not invoke you, though you well were sought
In Greece and Latium, sought by deathless bards,
Whose syren song enchants; and shall enchant,
Through Time's wide-circling round, though false
their faith,
And less than human were the gods they sung.
Though false their faith, they taught the best they
knew;
And (blush, O Christians!) liv'd above their faith.
They would have bless'd the beam, and hail'd the day
Which chas'd the moral darkness from their souls.
Oh! had their minds receiv'd the clearer ray
Of Revelation, they had learn'd to scorn
Their rites impure, their less than human gods,
Their wild mythology's fantastic maze.

Pure Plato! how had thy chaste spirit hail'd
A faith so fitted to thy moral sense!
What hadst thou felt, to see the fair romance
Of high imagination, the bright dream
Of thy pure fancy, more than realiz'd!
Sublime enthusiast! thou hadst blest a scheme
Fair, good, and perfect. How had thy rapt soul
Caught fire, and burnt with a diviner flame!
For e'en thy fair idea ne'er conceiv'd
Such plenitude of bliss, such boundless love,

As Deity made visible to sense.

Unhappy BRUTUS! philosophic mind!

Great 'midst the errors of the Stoic school!

How had thy kindling spirit joy'd to find

That thy lov'd virtue was no empty name:

Nor hadst thou met the vision at Philippi;

Nor hadst thou sheath'd thy bloody dagger's point

Or in the breast of Cæsar or thy own.

The Pagan page how far more wise than ours!

They with the gods they worshipp'd grac'd their
song;

Our song we grace with gods we disbelieve;

Retain the manners, but reject the creed.

Shall fiction only raise poetic flame,

And shall no altars blaze, O TRUTH, to thee?

Shall falsehood only please, and fable charm?

And shall eternal Truth neglected lie,

Because immortal, slighted, or profan'd?

Truth has our rev'rence only, not our love;

Our praise, but not our heart: a deity,

Confess'd, but shunn'd; acknowledg'd, not ador'd;

Alarm'd we dread her penetrating beams;

She comes too near us, and too brightly shines.

Why shun to make our duty our delight?

Let *pleasure* be the motive, disallow

All high incentives drawn from God's command:

Where shall we trace, through all the page profane,

A livelier pleasure and a purer source

Of innocent delight, than the fair book

Of holy Truth presents? for ardent youth,

The sprightly narrative; for years mature,

The moral document, in sober robe

Of grave philosophy array'd: which all

Had heard with admiration, had embrac'd
With rapture, had the shades of Academe,
Or the learn'd Porch produc'd it:—Tomes had then
Been multiplied on Tomes, to draw the veil
Of graceful allegory, to unfold
Some hidden source of beauty, now not felt!

Do not the powers of soul-enchancing song,
Strong imag'ry, bold figure, every charm
Of eastern flight sublime, apt metaphor,
And all the graces in thy lovely train,
Divine Simplicity! assemble all
In Sion's songs, and bold Isaiah's strain?

Why should the classic eye delight to trace
The tale corrupted from its prime pure source,
How Pyrrha and the fam'd Thessalian king
Restor'd the ruin'd race of lost mankind;
Yet turn, incurious, from the patriarch sav'd,
The rescu'd remnant of a delug'd world?
Why are we taught delighted to recount
Alcides' labours, yet neglect to note
Heroic Sampson 'midst a life of toil
Herculean? Pain and peril marking both,
A life eventful and disastrous death.
Can all the tales which Grecian story yields;
Can all the names the Roman page records
Of wondrous friendship and surpassing love;
Can gallant Theseus, and his brave compeer;
Orestes, and the partner of his toils;
Achates, and his friend; Euryalus
And blooming Nisus, pleasant in their lives,
And undivided by the stroke of death;
Can each, can all, a lovelier picture yield
Of virtuous friendship: can they all present

A tenderness more touching than the love
Of Jonathan and David?—Speak, ye young!
Who, undebauch'd as yet with Fashion's lore,
And unsophisticate, unbiass'd judge,
Say, is your quick attention more arous'd
By the red plagues which wasted smitten Thebes,
Than Heaven's avenging hand on Pharaoh's host?
Or do the vagrant Trojans, driven by fate
On adverse shores successive, yield a theme
More grateful to the eager appetite
Of young Impatience, than the wand'ring tribes
The Hebrew leader through the desert led?
The beauteous Maid * (though tender is the tale),
Whose guiltless blood on Aulis' altar stream'd,
Smites not the bosom with a softer pang
Than her in fate how sadly similar,
The Gileaditish virgin—victims both
Of vows unsanctified.——

Such are the lovely themes which court the Bard,
Scarce yet essay'd in verse—for verse how meet!
While heaven-descended song, forgetting oft
Her sacred dignity and high descent,
Debases her fair origin; oft spreads
Corruption's deadly bane, pollutes the heart
Of innocence, and with unhallow'd hand
Presents the poison'd chalice to the brim
Fill'd with delicious ruin, minist'ring
The unwholesome rapture to the fever'd taste,
While its fell venom, with malignant pow'r,
Strikes at the root of virtue, with'ring all
Her vital energy. Oh! for some balm

* Iphigenia.

Of sov'reign power, to raise the drooping Muse
To all the health of virtue ! to infuse.

A gen'rous warmth, to rouse an holy zeal
And give her high conceptions of herself,
Her dignity, her worth, her aim, her end !

For me, Eternal Spirit, let thy word
My path illumine ! O thou compassionate God !
Thou know'st our frame, thou know'st we are but
dust ;

From dust a Seraph's zeal thou wilt not seek,
Nor wilt thou ask an Angel's purity.

But hear, and hearing pardon ; as I strive,
Though with a feeble voice and flagging wing,
A glowing heart, but pow'rless hand to point
The faith of favour'd man to Heav'n ; to sing
The ways inscrutable of Heav'n to man ;
May I, by thy celestial guidance led,
Fix deep in my own heart the truths I teach !
In my own life transcribe whate'er of good
To others I propose ! and by thy rule
Correct the irregular*, reform the wrong,
Exalt the low, and brighten the obscure !
Still may I note, how all the agreeing parts
Of this consummate system join to frame
One fair, one finish'd, one harmonious whole !
Trace the close links which form the perfect chain
In beautiful connexion ; mark the scale
Whose nice gradations, with progression true,
For ever rising, end in DEITY !

* What in me is dark,
Illumine ! what is low, raise and support !
Paradise Lost.

MOSES IN THE BULRUSHES.

A Sacred Drama.



Let me assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to Man.

PARADISE LOST.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

HEBREW WOMEN.

JOCHEBED, *Mother of Moses.*

MIRIAM, *his Sister.*

EGYPTIANS.

The PRINCESS, *King Pharaoh's Daughter.*

MELITA ; *and other Attendants.*

SCENE—*On the Banks of the Nile.*

*The Subject is taken from the Second Chapter of
the Book of Exodus.*

MOSES IN THE BULRUSHES.

PART I.

JOCHEBED, MIRIAM.

JOCHEBED.

WHY was my pray'r accepted? why did Heav'n
In anger hear me, when I ask'd a son?
Ye dames of Egypt! ye triumphant mothers!
You no imperial tyrant marks for ruin;
You are not doom'd to see the babes you bore,
The babes you fondly nurture, bleed before you!
You taste the transports of a mother's love,
Without a mother's anguish! wretched Israel!
Can I forbear to mourn a different lot
Of thy sad daughters!—Why did God's own hand
Rescue his chosen race by Joseph's care?
Joseph! the elected instrument of Heav'n,
Decreed to save illustrious Abraham's sons,
What time the famine rag'd in Canaan's land.
Israel, who then was spar'd, must perish now!
Thou great mysterious Power! who hast involv'd
Thy wise decrees in darkness, to perplex
The pride of human wisdom, to confound
The daring scrutiny, and prove the faith

Of thy presuming creatures ! hear me now !
O vindicate thy honour ; clear this doubt ;
Teach me to trace this maze of Providence :
Why save the fathers, if the sons must perish ?

MIRIAM.

Ah me, my mother ! whence these floods of grief ?

JOCHEBED.

My son ! my son ! I cannot speak the rest,
Ye who have sons can only know my fondness !
Ye who have lost them, or who fear to lose,
Can only know my pangs ! none else can guess them.
A mother's sorrows cannot be conceiv'd
But by a mother—Would I were not one !

MIRIAM.

With earnest pray'rs thou didst request this son,
And Heaven has granted him.

JOCHEBED.

O sad estate
Of human wretchedness ; so weak is man,
So ignorant and blind, that did not God
Sometimes withhold in mercy what we ask,
We should be ruin'd at our own request.

Too well thou know'st, my child, the stern decree
Of Egypt's cruel king, hard-hearted Pharaoh ;
“ That every male, of Hebrew mother born,
Must die.” Oh ! do I live to tell it thee ?
Must die a bloody death ! My child, my son,
My youngest born, my darling must be slain !

MIRIAM.

The helpless innocent ! and must he die ?

JOCHEBED.

No: if a mother's tears, a mother's prayers,
A mother's fond precautions can prevail,
He shall not die. I have a thought, my Miriam,
And sure the God of mercies who inspir'd,
Will bless the secret purpose of my soul,
To save his precious life.

MIRIAM.

Hop'st thou that Pharaoh—

JOCHEBED.

I have no hope in Pharaoh, much in God;
Much in the ROCK of AGES.

MIRIAM.

Think, O think,
What perils thou already hast incurr'd,
And shun the greater which may yet remain.
Three months, three dangerous months, thou hast
preserv'd
Thy infant's life, and in thy house conceal'd him!
Should Pharaoh know!

JOCHEBED.

Oh! let the tyrant know,
And feel what he inflicts! Yes, hear me, Heav'n!
Send thy right aiming thunderbolts—But hush,
My impious murmurs! Is it not thy will;
Thou, infinite in mercy? Thou permit'st
This seeming evil for some latent good.
Yes, I will laud thy grace, and bless thy goodness
For what I have, and not arraign thy wisdom
For what I fear to lose. Oh, I will bless thee

That Aaron will be spar'd ! that my first born
Lives safe and undisturb'd ! that he was giv'n me
Before this impious persecution rag'd !

MIRIAM.

And yet who knows, but the fell tyrant's rage
May reach *his* precious life ?

JOCHEBED.

I fear for him,
For thee, for all. A doating parent lives
In many lives ; through many a nerve she feels ;
From child to child the quick affections spread,
For ever wand'ring, yet for ever fix'd.
Nor does division weaken, nor the force
Of constant operation e'er exhaust
Parental love. All other passions change
With changing circumstances ; rise or fall,
Dependant on their object ; claim returns ;
Live on reciprocation, and expire
Unfed by hope. A mother's fondness reigns
Without a rival, and without an end.

MIRIAM.

But say what Heav'n inspires to save thy son ?

JOCHEBED.

Since the dear fatal morn which gave him birth,
I have resolv'd in my distracted mind
Each means to save his life : and many a thought
Which fondness prompted, prudence has oppos'd
As perilous and rash. With these poor hands
I've fram'd a little ark of slender reeds ;
With pitch and slime I have secur'd the sides.

In this frail cradle I intend to lay
My little helpless infant, and expose him
Upon the banks of Nile.

MIRIAM.

'Tis full of danger.

JOCHEBED.

'Tis danger to expose, and death to keep him.

MIRIAM.

Yet, oh ! reflect. Should the fierce crocodile,
The native and the tyrant of the Nile,
Seize the defenceless infant !

JOCHEBED.

Oh, forbear !

Spare my fond heart. Yet not the crocodile,
Nor all the deadly monsters of the deep,
To me are half so terrible as Pharaoh,
That heathen king, that royal murderer !

MIRIAM.

Should he escape, which yet I dare not hope,
Each sea-born monster, yet the wind and waves
He cannot 'scape.

JOCHEBED.

Know, God is every where ;
Not to one narrow, partial spot confin'd ;
No, not to chosen Israel : he extends
Through all the vast infinitude of space ;
At his command the furious tempests rise—
The blasting of the breath of his displeasure.
He tells the world of waters when to roar ;

And, at his bidding, winds and seas are calm :
In him, not in an arm of flesh, I trust ;
In him, whose promise never yet has fail'd,
I place my confidence.

MIRIAM.

What must I do ?
Command thy daughter ; for thy words have wak'd
An holy boldness in my youthful breast.

JOCHEBED.

Go then, my Miriam, go, and take the infant.
Buried in harmless slumbers there he lies :
Let me not see him—spare my heart that pang.
Yet sure one little look may be indulg'd,
And I may feast my fondness with his smiles,
And snatch one last, last kiss—No more my heart ;
That rapture would be fatal—I should keep him.
I could not doom to death the babe I clasp'd :
Did ever mother kill her sleeping boy ?
I dare not hazard it—The task be thine.
Oh ! do not wake my child ; remove him softly ;
And gently lay him on the river's brink.

MIRIAM.

Did those magicians, whom the sons of Egypt
Consult and think all-potent, join their skill ;
And was it great as Egypt's sons believe ;
Yet all their secret wizard arts combin'd,
To save this little ark of bulrushes,
Thus fearfully exposed, could not effect it :
Their spells, their incantations, and dire charms
Could not preserve it.

JOCHEBED.

Know this ark is charm'd
With incantations Pharaoh ne'er employ'd ;
With spells which impious Egypt never knew :
With invocations to the living God,
I twisted every slender reed together,
And with a pray'r did every ozier weave.

MIRIAM.

I go.

JOCHEBED.

Yet ere thou go'st, observe me well !
When thou hast laid him in his wat'ry bed,
Oh leave him not ; but at a distance wait,
And mark what Heaven's high will determines for
him.
Lay him among the flags on yonder beach,
Just where the royal gardens meet the Nile.
I dare not follow him, Suspicion's eye
Would note my wild demeanour ! Miriam, yes,
The mother's fondness would betray the child.
Farewell ! God of my fathers, oh protect him !

PART II.

Enter MIRIAM, after having deposited the Child.

YES, I have laid him in his wat'ry bed,
His wat'ry grave, I fear!—I tremble still;
It was a cruel task—still I must weep!
But ah! my mother! who shall sooth thy griefs?
The flags and sea-weeds will awhile sustain
Their precious load; but it must sink ere long!
Sweet babe, farewell! Yet think not I will leave
thee;

No, I will watch thee till the greedy waves
Devour thy little bark ; I'll sit me down,
And sing to thee, sweet babe ; thou canst not hear,
But 'twill amuse me, while I watch thy fate.

[She sits down on a Bank and sings.

SONG.

THOU, who canst make the feeble strong,
O God of Israel, hear my song;
Not mine such notes as Egypt's daughters raise;
'Tis thee, O God of Hosts, I strive to praise.

Ye winds, the servants of the Lord,
Ye waves, obedient to his word,
Oh spare the babe committed to your trust;
And Israel shall confess the Lord is just !

Though doom'd to find an early grave,
 This infant, Lord, thy pow'r can save:
 And he whose death's decreed by Pharaoh's hand,
 May rise a prophet to redeem the land.

[She rises and looks out.]

What female form bends hitherward her steps,
 Of royal port she seems; perhaps some friend,
 Rais'd by the guardian care of bounteous Heav'n,
 To prop the falling house of Levi.—Soft!
 I'll listen unperceiv'd; these trees will hide me.

[She stands behind.]

*Enter the PRINCESS of EGYPT, attended by a
 Train of Ladies.*

PRINCESS.

No further, virgins; here I mean to rest,
 To taste the pleasant coolness of the breeze;
 Perhaps to bathe in this translucent stream.
 Did not our holy law* enjoin the ablution
 Frequent and regular, it still were needful
 To mitigate the fervours of our clime.
 Melita, stay—the rest at distance wait.

[They all go out except one.]

The PRINCESS looks out.

Sure, or I much mistake, or I perceive
 Upon the sedgy margin of the Nile
 A chest; entangled in the reeds it seems:
 Discern'st thou aught?

* The ancient Egyptians used to wash their bodies four times every twenty-four hours.

MELITA.

Something, but what I know not.

PRINCESS.

Go and examine what this sight may mean.

[*Exit Maid.*]MIRIAM *behind.*

O blest, beyond my hopes! he is discover'd ;
My brother will be sav'd ! who is this stranger?
Ah! 'tis the Princess, cruel Pharaoh's daughter.
If she resemble her inhuman Sire,
She must be cruel too ; yet fame reports her
Most merciful and mild.—Great Lord of all,
By whose good spirit bounteous thoughts are given
And deeds of love perform'd—be gracious now,
And touch her soul with mercy !

Re-enter MELITA.

PRINCESS.

Well, Melita!

Hast thou discover'd what the vessel is?

MELITA.

Oh, Princess, I have seen the strangest sight !
Within the vessel lies a sleeping babe,
A fairer infant have I never seen !

PRINCESS.

Who knows but some unhappy Hebrew woman
Has thus expos'd her infant, to evade
The stern decree of my too cruel Sire.
Unhappy mothers ! oft my heart has bled

In secret anguish o'er your slaughter'd sons ;
Powerless to save, yet hating to destroy.

MELITA.

Should this be so, my Princess knows the danger.

PRINCESS.

No danger should deter from acts of mercy.

MIRIAM *behind*.

A thousand blessings on her princely head !

PRINCESS.

Too much the sons of Jacob have endur'd
From royal Pharaoh's unrelenting hate ;
Too much our house has crush'd their alien race.
Is't not enough that cruel task-masters
Grind them by hard oppression ? not enough
That iron bondage bows their spirits down ?
Is't not enough my Sire his greatness owes,
His palaces, his fanes magnificent,
Those structures which the world with wonder
views,

To much-insulted Israel's patient race ?
To them his growing cities owe their splendour ;
Their toils fair Rameses and Pythom built ;
And shall we fill the measure of our crimes,
And crown our guilt with murder ? and shall I
Sanction the sin I hate ? forbid it, Mercy !

MELITA.

I know thy royal father fears the strength
Of this still growing race, who flourish more
The more they are oppress'd : he dreads their numbers.

PRINCESS.

Apis forbid ! Pharaoh afraid of Israel !
Yet should this outcast race, this hapless people,
E'er grow to such a formidable greatness
(Which all the gods avert whom Egypt worships),
This infant's life can never serve their cause,
Nor can his single death prevent their greatness.

MELITA.

Trust not to that vain hope. By weakest means
And most unlikely instruments, full oft
Are great events produc'd. This rescu'd child
Perhaps may live to serve his upstart race
More than an host.

PRINCESS.

How ill does it beseem
Thy tender years and gentle womanhood,
To steel thy breast to pity's sacred touch !
So weak, so unprotected is our sex,
So constantly expos'd, so very helpless,
That did not Heav'n itself enjoin compassion,
Yet human policy should make us kind,
Lest in the rapid turn of fortune's wheel,
We live to need the pity we refuse.
Yes, I will save him—Mercy, thou hast conquer'd !
Lead on—and from the rushes we'll remove
The feeble ark which cradles this poor babe.

[*The Princess and her Maid go out.*]

MIRIAM comes forward.

How poor were words to speak my boundless joy.

The Princess will protect him! bless her, Heav'n!

[She looks out after the Princess, and describes her action.]

With what impatient steps she seeks the shore!
Now she approaches where the ark is laid!
With what compassion, with what angel-sweetness,
She bends to look upon the infant's face!
She takes his little hand in hers—he wakes—
She smiles upon him—hark, alas! he cries;
Weep on, sweet babe! weep on, till thou hast touch'd
Each chord of pity, waken'd every sense
Of melting sympathy, and stol'n her soul!
She takes him in her arms—O lovely Princess!
How goodness heightens beauty! now she clasps him
With fondness to her heart, she gives him now
With tender caution to her damsel's arms:
She points her to the palace, and again
This way the Princess bends her gracious steps;
The virgin train retire and bear the child.

Re-enter the PRINCESS.

PRINCESS.

Did ever innocence and infant beauty
Plead with such dumb but powerful eloquence?
If I, a stranger, feel these soft emotions,
What must the mother who expos'd him feel?
Go, fetch a woman of the Hebrew race,
That she may nurse the babe;—and, by her garb,
Lo, such a one is here!

MIRIAM.

Princess, all hail!

Forgive the bold intrusion of thy servant,
Who stands a charm'd spectator of thy goodness.

PRINCESS.

I have redeem'd an infant from the waves,
Whom I intend to nurture as mine own.

MIRIAM.

My transports will betray me! [*Aside*] Gen'rous
Princess!

PRINCESS.

Know'st thou a matron of the Hebrew race
To whom I may confide him?

MIRIAM.

Well I know
A prudent matron of the house of Levi;
Her name is Jochebed, the wife of Amram;
Of gentle manners, fam'd throughout her tribe
For soft humanity; full well I know
That she will rear him with a mother's love.
[*Aside*] Oh! truly spoke! a mother's love indeed!
To her despairing arms I mean to give
This precious trust! the nurse shall be the mother!

PRINCESS.

With speed conduct this matron to the palace.
Yes, I will raise him up to princely greatness,
And he shall be my son! I'll have him train'd
By choicest sages, in the deepest lore
Of Egypt's sapient sons; his name be *Moses*,
For I have drawn him from the perilous flood.

[*They go out. She kneels.*]

Thou Great Unseen! who causest gentle deeds,

And smil'st on what thou causest: thus I bless thee,
That thou didst deign consult the tender make
Of yielding human hearts, when thou ordain'st
Humanity a virtue! didst not make it
A rigorous exercise to counteract
Some strong desire within; to war and fight
Against the powers of Nature; but didst bend
The natural bias of the soul to mercy:
Then mad'st that mercy duty! Gracious Pow'r!
Mad'st the keen rapture exquisite as right;
Beyond the joys of sense; as pleasure sweet,
As reason vigorous, and as instinct strong!

PART III.

Enter JOCHEBED.

I've almost reach'd the place—with cautious steps
I must approach the spot where he is laid,
Lest from the royal gardens any spy me.
—Poor babe! ere this the pressing calls of hunger
Have broke thy short repose; the chilling waves,
Ere this, have drench'd thy little shiv'ring limbs.
What must my babe have suffer'd—No one sees me!
But soft, does no one listen!—Ah! how hard,
How very hard for fondness to be prudent!
Now is the moment to embrace and feed him.
[*She looks out.*
Where's Miriam? she has left her little charge.

Perhaps through fear; perhaps she was detected.
 How wild is thought! how terrible conjecture!
 A mother's fondness frames a thousand fears,
 With thrilling nerve feels every real ill,
 And shapes imagin'd miseries into being.

[*She looks towards the River.*

Ah me! where is he? soul-distracting sight!
 He is not there—he's lost, he's gone, he's drown'd!
 Toss'd by each beating surge my infant floats.
 Cold, cold, and wat'ry is thy grave, my child!
 Oh no—I see the ark—Transporting sight!

[*She goes towards it.*

I have it here. Alas, the ark is empty!
 The casket's left, the precious gem is gone!
 You spar'd him, pitying spirits of the deep!
 But vain your mercy; some insatiate beast,
 Cruel as Pharaoh, took the life you spar'd—
 And I shall uever, never see my boy!

Enter MIRIAM.

JOCHEBED.

Come and lament with me thy brother's loss!

MIRIAM.

Come and adore with me the God of Jacob!

JOCHEBED.

Miriam!—the child is dead!

MIRIAM.

He lives! he lives!

JOCHEBED.

Impossible—Oh, do not mock my grief!
 See'st thou that empty vessel?

MIRIAM.

From that vessel
The Egyptian Princess took him.

JOCHEBED.

Pharaoh's daughter?
Then still he will be slain: a bloodier death
Will terminate his woes.

MIRIAM.

His life is safe;
For know, she means to rear him as her own.

JOCHEBED.

[*Falls on her Knees in rapture.*

To God, the Lord, the glory be ascrib'd!
Oh, magnified for ever be THY might
Who mock'st all human forethought! who o'errul'st
The hearts of sinners to perform thy work,
Defeating their own purpose! who canst plant
Unlook'd-for mercy in a heathen's-heart,
And from the depth of evil bring forth good!
[*She rises.*

MIRIAM.

O blest event, beyond our warmest hopes!

JOCHEBED.

What! shall my son be nurtur'd in a court,
In princely grandeur bred? taught every art
And ev'ry wondrous science Egypt knows?
Yet ah! I tremble, Miriam; should he learn
With Egypt's polish'd arts her baneful faith!
Oh, worse exchange for death! yes, should he learn,

In yon proud palace to disown his hand
Who thus has sav'd him : should he e'er embrace
(As sure he will, if bred in Pharaoh's court)
The gross idolatries which Egypt owns,
Her graven images, her brutish gods,
Then shall I wish he had not been preserv'd
To shame his fathers and deny his faith.

MIRIAM.

Then, to dispel thy fears and crown thy joy,
Hear further wonders—Know, the gen'rous Princess
To thine own care thy darling child commits.

JOCHEBED.

Speak, while my joy will give me leave to listen !

MIRIAM.

By her commission'd, thou behold'st me here,
To seek a matron of the Hebrew race
To nurse him : thou, my mother, art that matron.
I said I knew thee well ; that thou wouldst rear him
E'en with a mother's fondness ; she who bare him
(I told the Princess) would not love him more.

JOCHEBED.

Fountain of Mercy ! whose pervading eye
Can look within and read what passes there,
Accept my thoughts for thanks ! I have no words
My soul, o'erfraught with gratitude, rejects
The aid of language—Lord ! behold my heart.

MIRIAM.

Yes, thou shalt pour into his infant mind
The purest precepts of the purest faith.

JOCHEBED.

Oh! I will fill his tender soul with virtue,
And warm his bosom with devotion's flame!
Aid me, celestial Spirit! with thy grace,
And be my labours with thy influence crown'd!
Without it they were vain. Then, then, my Miriam,
When he is furnish'd, 'gainst the evil day,
With God's whole armour*, girt with sacred truth,
And as a breastplate wearing righteousness,
Arm'd with the Spirit of God, the shield of faith,
And with the helmet of salvation crown'd,
Inur'd to watching and dispos'd to pray'r;
Then may I send him to a dangerous court,
And safely trust him in a perilous world,
Too full of tempting snares and fond delusions!

MIRIAM.

May bounteous Heav'n thy pious cares reward!

JOCHEBED.

O Amram! oh, my husband! when thou com'st,
Wearied at night, to rest thee from the toils
Impos'd by haughty Pharaoh, what a tale
Have I to tell thee! Yes: thy darling son
Was lost, and is restor'd; was dead, and lives!

MIRIAM.

How joyful shall we spend the live-long night
In praises to Jehovah; who thus mocks
All human foresight, and converts the means
Of seeming ruin into great deliverance.

* 2 Thess. v. Ephes. vi.

JOCHEBED.

Had not my child been doom'd to such strange
perils
As a fond mother trembles to recal,
He had not been preserv'd.

MIRIAM.

And mark still further;
Had he been sav'd by any other hand,
He had been still expos'd to equal ruin.

JOCHEBED.

Then let us join to bless the hand of Heav'n,
That this poor outcast of the house of Israel,
Condemn'd to die by Pharaoh, kept in secret
By my advent'rous fondness; then expos'd
E'en by that very fondness which conceal'd him,
Is now, to fill the wondrous round of mercy,
Preserv'd from perishing by Pharaoh's daughter,
Sav'd by the very hand which sought to crush him!

Wise and unsearchable are all thy ways,
Thou GOD OF MERCIES!—Lead me to my child.

DAVID AND GOLIATH.

A Sacred Drama.



O bienheureux mille fois,
L'Enfant que le Seigneur aime,
Qui de bonne heure entend sa voix,
Et que ce Dieu daigne instruire lui-même!
Loin du mond élevé; de tous les dons des Cieux,
Il est orné des sa naissance;
Et du méchant l'abord contagieux
N'altère, point son innocence.

ATHALIE.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

SAUL, *King of Israel.*

ABNER, *his General.*

JESSE.

ELIAB,

ABINADAB, } *Sons of JESSE.*

DAVID,

GOLIATH, *the Philistine Giant.*

Philistines, Israelites, &c. &c.

Chorus of Hebrew Women.

*The Scene lies in the Camp in the Valley of Elah,
and the adjacent Plain.*

*The Subject is taken from the Seventeenth Chapter
of the First Book of Samuel.*

DAVID AND GOLIATH.

PART I.

SCENE—*A Shepherd's Tent on a Plain.*

DAVID, *under a spreading Tree, plays on his Harp and sings.*

GREAT Lord of all things! Pow'r divine!
Breathe on this erring heart of mine
Thy grace serene and pure;
Defend my frail, my erring youth,
And teach me this important truth,
The humble are secure!

Teach me to bless my lowly lot,
Confin'd to this paternal cot,
Remote from regal state!
Content to court the cooling glade,
Inhale the breeze, enjoy the shade,
And love my humble fate.

No anxious vigils here I keep,
No dreams of gold distract my sleep,
Nor lead my heart astray;
Nor blasting Envy's tainted gale
Pollutes the pleasures of the vale,
To vex my harmless day.

Yon tow'r, which rears its head so high,
And bids defiance to the sky,
 Invites the hostile winds :
Yon branching oak, extending wide,
Provokes destruction by its pride,
 And courts the fall it finds.

Then let me shun the ambitious deed,
And all the dang'rous paths which lead
 To honours falsely won :
Lord ! in thy sure protection blest,
Submissive will I ever rest,
 And may thy will be done !
 [*He lays down his Harp and rises.*

DAVID.

Methinks this shepherd's life were dull and taste-
less,
Without the charm of soothing song or harp :
With it, not undelightful is the haunt
Of wood, or lonely grove, or russet plain,
Made vocal by the muse. With this lov'd harp,
This daily solace of my cares, I sooth'd
The melancholy monarch, when he lay
Smit by the chill and spirit-quenching hand
Of black Despair. God of my fathers, hear me,
Here I devote my harp, my verse, myself,
To thy blest service ! gladly to proclaim
Glory to God on high, on earth good-will
To man ; to pour my grateful soul before thee ;
To sing thy pow'r, thy wisdom, and thy love,
And every gracious attribute : to paint
The charms of heav'n-born virtue ! So shall I

(Though with long interval of worth) aspire
To imitate the work of saints above,
Of Cherub and of Seraphim. My heart,
My talents, all I am, and all I have,
Is thine, O Father! Gracious Lord, accept
The humble dedication! Offer'd gifts
Of slaughter'd bulls and goats sacrificial
Thou hast refus'd: but lo, I come, O Lord!
To do thy will; the living sacrifice
Of an obedient heart I lay before thee;
This humble off'ring more shall please thee, Lord,
Than horned bullocks, ceremonial rites,
New moons, and sabbaths, passovers and fasts!
Yet those I too will keep; but not in lieu
Of holiness substantial, inward worth;
As commutation cheap for pious deeds
And purity of life, but as the types
Of better things; as fair external signs
Of inward holiness and secret truth.

But see, my father, good old Jesse, comes!
To cheer the setting evening of whose life,
Content, a simple shepherd here I dwell,
Though Israel is in arms; and royal Saul,
Encamp'd in yonder field, defies Philistia.

JESSE, DAVID.

JESSE.

Blest be the gracious Pow'r who gave my age
To boast a son like thee! Thou art the staff
Which props my bending years, and makes me bear
The heavy burden of declining age
With fond complacence. How unlike thy fate,

O venerable Eli! But two sons,
But only two to gild the dim remains
Of life's departing day, and bless thy age,
And both were curses to thee! Witness, Heav'n!
In all the cruel catalogue of pains
Humanity turns o'er, if there be one
So terrible to human tenderness
As an unnatural child!

DAVID.

Oh! my lov'd father!
Long may'st thou live, in years and honours rich;
To taste and to communicate the joys,
The thousand fond, endearing charities
Of tenderness domestic; Nature's best
And loveliest gift, with which she well atones
The niggard boon of fortune.

JESSE.

Oh! my son!
Of all the graces which adorn thy youth,
I, with a father's fondness must commend
Thy tried humility. For though the seer
Pour'd on thy chosen head the sacred oil
In sign of future greatness, in sure pledge
Of highest dignity, yet here thou dwell'st
Content with toil and careless of repose;
And (harder still for an ingenuous mind)
Content to be obscure; content to watch,
With careful eye, thine humble father's flock!
O earthly emblem of celestial things!
So Israel's shepherd watches o'er his fold:
The weak ones in his fost'ring bosom bears:

And gently leads, in his sustaining hand,
The feeble ones with young.

DAVID.

Know'st thou, my father,
Aught from the field? for though so near the camp,
Though war's proud ensigns stream on yonder plain,
And all Philistia's swarming hosts encamp,
Oppos'd to royal Saul, beneath whose banners
My brothers lift the spear,—I have not left
My fleecy charge, by thee committed to me,
To learn the various fortune of the war.

JESSE.

And wisely hast thou done. Thrice happy realm,
Who shall submit one day to his command
Who can so well obey! Obedience leads
To certain honours. Not the tow'ring wing
Of eagle-plum'd ambition mounts so surely
To fortune's highest summit as obedience.

[*A distant Sound of Trumpets.*

But why that sudden ardour, O my son?
That trumpet's sound (though so remote its voice,
We hardly catch the echo as it dies)
Has rous'd the mantling crimson in thy cheek,
Kindled the martial spirit in thine eye;
And my young shepherd feels an hero's fire!

DAVID.

Thou hast not told the posture of the war!
And much my beating bosom pants to hear.

JESSE.

Uncertain is the fortune of the field.

I tremble for thy brothers, thus expos'd
To constant peril ; nor for them alone
Does the quick feeling agonize my heart.
I feel for all !—I mourn, that ling'ring war
Still hangs his banner o'er my native land,
Belov'd Jerusalem ! O war ! what art thou ?
At once the proof and scourge of man's fallen state !
After the brightest conquest, what appears
Of all thy glories ? for the vanquish'd, chains !
For the proud victor, what ? Alas ! to reign
O'er desolated nations ! a drear waste,
By one man's crime, by one man's lust of pow'r,
Unpeopled ! Ravag'd fields assume the place
Of smiling harvests, and uncultur'd plains
Succeed the fertile vineyard ; barren waste
Deforms the spot once rich with luscious fig
And the fat olive.—Devastation reigns.
Here, rifled temples are the cavern'd dens
Of savage beasts, or haunt of birds obscene :
There pop'lous cities blacken in the sun,
And in the gen'ral wreck, proud palaces
Lie undistinguish'd, save by the dun smoke
Of recent conflagration. When the song
Of dear-bought joy, with many a triumph swell'd,
Salutes the victor's ear, and soothes his pride,
How is the grateful harmony profan'd
With the sad dissonance of virgin's cries,
Who mourn their brothers slain ! of matrons hoar,
Who clasp their wither'd hands, and fondly ask,
With iteration shrill, their slaughter'd sons !
How is the laurel's verdure stain'd with blood !
And soil'd with widow's tears !

DAVID.

Thrice mournful truth !

Yet when our country's sacred rights are menac'd;
Her firm foundations shaken to their base;
When all we love, and all that we revere,
Our hearths and altars, children, parents, wives,
Our liberties and laws, the Throne they guard,
Are scorn'd and trampled on—then, then, my father !
'Tis then Religion's voice; then God himself
Commands us to defend his injur'd name,
And think the victory cheaply bought with life.
'Twere then inglorious weakness, mean self-love,
To lie inactive, when the stirring voice
Of the shrill trumpet wakes the patriot youth,
And with heroic valour, bids them dare
The foul idolatrous bands e'en to the death.

JESSE.

God and thy country claim the life they gave;
No other cause can sanctify resentment.

DAVID.

Sure virtuous friendship is a noble cause !
Oh, were the princely Jonathan in danger,
How would I die, well pleas'd in his defence !
When, 'twas long since, then but a stripling boy
I made short sojourn in his father's palace
(At first to sooth his troubled mind with song,
His armour-bearer next), I well remember
The gracious bounties of the gallant prince,
How would he sit, attentive to my strain,
While to my harp I sung the harmless joys

Which crown a shepherd's life! How would he cry,
Bless'd youth! far happier in thy native worth,
Far richer in the talent Heav'n has lent thee,
Than if a crown hung o'er thy anxious brow.
The jealous monarch mark'd our growing friendship ;

And as my favour grew with those about him,
His royal bounty lessen'd, till at length,
For Bethl'hem's safer shades I left the court.
Nor would these alter'd features now be known,
Grown into manly strength: nor this chang'd form,
Enlarg'd with age, and clad in russet weed.

JESSE.

I have employment for thee, my lov'd son!
Will please thy active spirit. Go, my boy!
Haste to the field of war, to yonder camp,
Where in the vale of Elah mighty Saul
Commands the hosts of Israel. Greet thy brothers:
Observe their deeds, note their demeanour well,
And mark if on their actions Wisdom waits.
Bear to them too (for well the waste of war
Will make it needful), such plain healthful viands
As furnish out our frugal shepherd's meal.
And to the valiant captain of their host
Present such rural gifts as suit our fortune:
Heap'd on the board within my tent thou'lt find
them.

DAVID.

With joy I'll bear thy presents to my brothers;
And to the valiant captain of their host
The rural gifts thy gratitude assigns him.

Delightful task!—for I shall view the camp!
What transport to behold the tented field,
The pointed spear, the blaze of shields and arms,
And all the proud accoutrements of war!
But, oh! far dearer transport would it yield me,
Could this right arm alone avenge the cause
Of injur'd Israel! could my single death
Preserve the guiltless thousands doom'd to bleed!

JESSE.

Let not thy youth be dazzled, O my son!
With deeds of bold emprise, as valour only
Were virtue; and the gentle arts of peace,
Of truth and justice, were not worth thy care.
When thou shalt view the splendours of the war,
The gay caparison, the burnish'd shield,
The plume-crown'd helmet, and the glitt'ring spear,
Scorn not the humble virtues of the shade,
Nor think that Heav'n views only with applause,
The active merit and the busy toil
Of heroes, statesmen, and the bustling sons
Of public care. These have their just reward,
In wealth, in honours, and the well-earn'd fame,
Their high achievements bring. 'Tis in this view
That virtue is her proper recompense:
Wealth, as its natural consequence, will flow
From industry: toil with success is crown'd:
From splendid actions high renown will spring:
Such is the usual course of human things;
For Wisdom Infinite permits, that thus
Effects to causes be proportionate,
And nat'ral ends by nat'ral means achiev'd.

But in the future estimate which Heav'n
Will make of things terrestrial, know, my son,
That no inferior blessing is reserv'd
For the mild passive virtues: meek Content,
Heroic Self-denial, nobler far
Than all the achievements noisy Fame reports
When her shrill trump proclaims the proud success
Which desolates the nations. But, on earth,
These are not always prosperous—mark the cause:
Eternal Justice keeps them for the bliss
Of final recompense, for the dread day
Of gen'ral retribution. O my son!
The ostentatious virtues which still press
For notice and for praise; the brilliant deeds
Which live but in the eye of observation,
These have their meed at once. But there's a joy,
To the fond votaries of fame unknown,
To hear the still small voice of Conscience speak
Its whispering plaudit to the silent soul.
Heav'n notes the sigh afflicted Goodness heaves;
Hears the low plaint by human ear unheard,
And from the cheek of patient Sorrow wipes
The tear, by mortal eye unseen or scorn'd.

DAVID.

As Hermon's dew their grateful freshness shed,
And cheer the herbage, and the flow'rs renew,
So do thy words a quick'ning balm infuse,
And grateful sink in my delighted soul.

JESSE.

Go then, my child! and may the gracious God
Who bless'd our fathers, bless my much-lov'd son!

DAVID.

Farewell, my father!—and of this be sure,
That not one precept from thy honour'd lips
Shall fall by me unnotic'd; not one grace,
One venerable virtue which adorns
Thy daily life, but I, with watchful care
And due observance, will in mine transplant it.
[*Exit David.*]

JESSE.

He's gone! and still my aching eyes pursue,
And strain their orbs still longer to behold him.
Oh! who can tell when I may next embrace him?
Who can declare the counsels of the Lord?
Or when the moment, pre-ordain'd by Heav'n
To fill his great designs, may come? This son,
This blessing of my age, is set apart
For high exploits; the chosen instrument
Of all-disposing Heav'n for mighty deeds.
Still I recal the day, and to my mind
The scene is ever present, when the Seer,
Illustrious Samuel, to the humble shades
Of Bethlehem came, pretending sacrifice,
To screen his errand from the jealous king.
He sanctified us first, me and my sons;
For sanctity increas'd should still precede
Increase of dignity. When he declar'd
He came, commission'd from on High, to find,
Among the sons of Jesse, Israel's king,
Astonishment entranc'd my wond'ring soul!
Yet was it not a wild tumultuous bliss;
Such rash delight as promis'd honours yield

To light vain minds: no, 'twas a doubtful joy,
Chastis'd by tim'rous Virtue, lest a gift
So splendid and so dang'rous might destroy
Him it was not meant to raise. My eldest born,
Eliab, tall of stature, I presented;
But God, who judges not by outward form,
But tries the heart, forbade the holy prophet
To choose my eldest born. For Saul, he said,
Gave proof, that fair proportion, and the grace
Of limb or feature, ill repaid the want
Of virtue. All my other sons alike
By Samuel were rejected; till, at last,
On my young boy, on David's chosen head,
The prophet pour'd the consecrated oil.
Yet ne'er did pride elate him, ne'er did scorn
For his rejected elders swell his heart.
Not in such gentle charity to him
His haughtier brothers live: but all he pardons.
To meditation, and to humble toil,
To pray'r, and praise devoted, here he dwells.
Oh, may the graces which adorn retreat
One day delight a court! record his name
With saints and prophets, dignify his race,
And may the sacred songs his leisure frames
Instruct mankind, and sanctify a world!

ABINADAB.

'Tis near the time
 When in the adjacent valley which divides
 The opposing armies, he is wont to make
 His daily challenge.

ELIAB.

Much I marvel, brother,
 No greetings from our father reach our ears.
 With ease and plenty bless'd, he little recks
 The daily hardships which his sons endure.
 But see! behold, his darling boy approaches.

ABINADAB.

How, David here! whence this unlook'd for
 guest?

ELIAB.

A spy upon our actions; sent, no doubt,
 To scan our deeds, with beardless gravity
 Affecting wisdom; to observe each word,
 To magnify the venial faults of youth,
 And construe harmless mirth to foul offence.

Enter DAVID.

DAVID.

All hail, my dearest brothers!

ELIAB,

Means thy greeting
 True love, or arrogant scorn?

DAVID.

Oh, most true love!
 Sweet as the precious ointment which bedew'd

The sacred head of Aaron, and descended
Upon his hallow'd vest ; so sweet, my brothers,
Is fond fraternal amity ; such love
As my touch'd bosom feels at your approach.

ELIAB.

Still that fine glozing speech, those holy saws,
And all that trick of studied sanctity,
Of smooth-turn'd periods and trim eloquence,
Which charms thy doting father ! But confess,
What dost thou here ! Is it to sooth thy pride,
And gratify thy vain desire to roam
In quest of pleasures unallow'd ? or com'st thou,
A willing spy, to note thy brothers' deeds ?
Where hast thou left those few poor straggling sheep ?
More suited to thy ignorance and years
The care of those, than here to wander idly ;
Why cam'st thou hither ?

DAVID.

Is there not a cause ?
Why that displeasure kindling in thine eye,
My angry brother ? why those taunts unkind ?
Not idly bent on sport ; not to delight
Mine eye with all this gay parade of war ;
To gratify a roving appetite,
Or fondly to indulge a curious ear
With any tale of rumour, am I come ;
But to approve myself a loving brother.
I bring the blessing of your aged sire,
With gifts of such plain cates and rural viands
As suit his frugal fortune. Tell me now,
Where the bold captain of your host encamps ?

ELIAB.

Wherefore inquire? what boots it thee to know?
Behold him there? great Abner, fam'd in arms.

DAVID.

I bring thee, mighty Abner, from my father
(A simple shepherd swain in yonder vale),
Such humble gifts as shepherd swains bestow.

ABNER.

Thanks, gentle youth, with pleasure I receive
The grateful off'ring. Why does thy quick eye
Thus wander with unsatisfied delight?

DAVID.

New as I am to all the trade of war,
Each sound has novelty; each thing I see
Attracts attention; every noise I hear
Awakes confus'd emotions; indistinct,
Yet full of charming tumult, sweet distraction.
'Tis all delightful hurry! Oh! the joy
Of young ideas painted on the mind,
In the warm glowing colours fancy spreads
On objects not yet known, when all is new,
And all is lovely! Ah! what warlike sound
Salutes my ravish'd ear? [Sound of Trumpet.

ABNER.

'Tis the Philistine,
Proclaiming by his herald, through the ranks,
His near approach. Each morning he repeats
His challenge to our bands.

DAVID.

Ha ! what Philistine ?

Who is he ?

ELIAB.

Wherefore ask ? for thy raw youth
And rustic ignorance, 'twere fitter learn
Some rural art ! some secret to prevent
Contagion in thy flocks ; some better means
To save their fleece immaculate. These mean arts
Of soft inglorious peace far better suit
Thy low obscurity, than thus to seek
High things pertaining to exploits of arms.

DAVID.

Urg'd as I am, I will not answer thee.
Who conquers his own spirit, O my brother !
He is the only conqueror.—Again
That shout mysterious ! Pray you (*to Abner*), tell
me who
This proud Philistine is, who sends defiance
To Israel's hardy chieftains ?

ABNER.

Stranger youth !
So lovely and so mild is thy demeanour,
So gentle and so patient ; such the air
Of candour and of courage which adorns
Thy blooming features, thou hast won my love :
And I will tell thee.

DAVID.

Mighty Abner, thanks !

ABNER.

Thrice, and no more, he sounds his daily rôle!
This man of war, this champion of Philistia,
Is of the sons of Anak's giant-race:
Goliath is his name. His fearful stature,
Unparallel'd in Israel, measures more
Than twice three cubits. On his tow'ring head
A helm of burnish'd brass the giant wears,
So pond'rous, it would crush the stoutest man
In all our hosts. A coat of mailed armour
Guards his capacious trunk; compar'd with which,
The amplest oak that spreads his rugged arms
In Bashan's groves, were small. About his neck
A shining corslet hangs. On his vast thigh
The plaited cuirass, firmly jointed, stands.
But who shall tell the wonders of his spear,
And hope to gain belief! Of massive iron
Its temper'd frame; not less than the broad beam
To which the busy weaver hangs his loom:
Not to be wielded by a mortal hand,
Save by his own. An armour-bearer walks
Before this mighty champion, in his hand
Bearing the giant's shield. Thrice ev'ry morn
His herald sounds the trumpet of defiance!
Off'ring at once to end the long-drawn war
In single combat, 'gainst that hardy foe
Who dares encounter him.

DAVID.

Say, mighty Abner,
What are the haughty terms of his defiance?

ABNER.

Proudly he stalks around the extremest bounds
Of Elah's vale. His herald sounds the note
Of offer'd battle. Then the furious giant,
With such a voice as from the troubled sky
In vollied thunder breaks, thus sends his challenge :
“ Why do you set your battle in array,
Ye men of Israel ? Wherefore waste the lives
Of needless thousands ? Why protract a war
Which may at once be ended ? Are not you
Servants to Saul, your king ? and am not I,
With triumph let me speak it, a Philistine ?
Choose out a man from all your armed hosts,
Of courage most approv'd, and I will meet him ;
His single arm to mine. The event of this
Shall fix the fate of Israel and Philistia.
If victory favour him, then we will live
Your tributary slaves ; but if my arm
Be crown'd with conquest, you shall then live ours.
Give me a man, if your effeminate hands
A man can boast. Your armies I defy ! ”

DAVID.

What shall be done to him who shall subdue
This vile idolater ?

ABNER.

He shall receive
Such ample bounties, such profuse rewards,
As might inflame the old, or warm the coward,
Were not the odds so desperate.

DAVID.

Say what are they ?

ABNER.

The royal Saul has promis'd that bold hero,
Who should encounter and subdue Goliath,
All dignity and favour ; that his house
Shall be set free from tribute, and ennobled
With the first honours Israel has to give.
And for the gallant conqueror himself,
No less a recompense than the fair princess,
Our monarch's peerless daughter.

DAVID.

Beauteous Michal!

It is indeed a boon which kings might strive for.
And has none answer'd yet this bold defiance?
What! all this goodly host of Israelites!
God's own peculiar people! all afraid
To' assert God's injur'd honour and their own?
Where is the king, who, in his early youth
Wrought deeds of fame? Where princely Jonathan?
Not so the gallant youth Philistia fear'd
At Bozez and at Seneh*; when the earth
Shook from her deep foundations, to behold
The wondrous carnage of his single hand
On the uncircumcis'd. When he exclaim'd,
With glorious confidence—" Shall numbers awe me?
God will protect his own; with him to save,
It boots not, friends, by many or by few."
This was an hero! Why does he delay
To meet this boaster? For thy courtesy,
Thrice noble Abner, I am bound to thank thee!

* 1 Samuel xlv.

Wouldst thou complete thy gen'rous offices ?
I dare not ask it.

ABNER.

Speak thy wishes freely :
My soul inclines to serve thee.

DAVID,

Then, O Abner,
Conduct me to the king ! There is a cause
Will justify this boldness !

ELIAB. .

Braggard, hold !

ABNER.

I take thee at thy word ; and will, with speed,
Conduct thee to my royal master's presence.
In yonder tent the anxious monarch waits
The event of this day's challenge.

DAVID.

Noble Abner,
Accept my thanks. Now to thy private ear,
If so thy grace permit, I will unfold
My secret soul, and ease my lab'ring breast,
Which pants with high designs, and beats for glory.

PART III.

Scene—SAUL's Tent.

SAUL.

WHY was I made a king? what I have gain'd
In envied greatness and uneasy pow'r,
I've lost in peace of mind, in virtue lost!
Why did deceitful transports fire my soul
When Samuel plac'd upon my youthful brow
The crown of Israel? I had known content,
Nay happiness, if happiness unmix'd
To mortal man were known, had I still liv'd
Among the humble tents of Benjamin.
A shepherd's occupation was my joy,
And every guiltless day was crown'd with peace.
But now, a sullen cloud for ever hangs
O'er the faint sunshine of my brightest hours,
Dark'ning the golden promise of the morn.
I ne'er shall taste the dear domestic joys
My meanest subjects know. True, I have sons,
Whose virtues would have charm'd a private man,
And drawn down blessings on their humble sire.
I love their virtues too; but 'tis a love
Which jealousy has poison'd. Jonathan
Is all a father's fondness could conceive
Of amiable and good—Of that no more!
He is too popular; the people dote

Upon the ingenuous graces of his youth.
Curs'd popularity ! which makes a father
Detest the merit of a son he loves.
How did their fond idolatry, perforce,
Rescue his sentenc'd life, when doom'd by lot
To perish at Beth-aven*, for the breach
Of strict injunction, that of all my bands,
Not one that day should taste of food and live!
My subjects clamour at this tedious war ;
Yet, of my num'rous armed chiefs, not one
Has courage to engage this man of Gath.
Oh for a champion bold enough to face
This giant-boaster, whose repeated threats
Strike through my inmost soul ! There was a time—
Of that no more!—I am not what I was.
Should valiant Jonathan accept the challenge,
'Twould but increase his influence, raise his fame,
And make the crown sit loosely on my brow.
Ill could my wounded spirit brook the voice
Of harsh comparison 'twixt sire and son.

SAUL, ABNER.

ABNER.

What meditation holds thee thus engag'd,
O king ! and keeps thine active spirit bound ;
When busy war far other cares demand
Than ruminating thought and pale despair ?

SAUL.

Abner, draw near. My weary soul sinks down
Beneath the heavy pressure of misfortune.

* 1 Samuel xiv.

Oh for that spirit which inflam'd my breast
With sudden fervour, when among the seers
And holy sages my prophetic voice
Was heard attentive, and the astonish'd throng,
Wond'ring, exclaim'd,—"Is Saul among the
Prophets?"

Where's that bold arm which quell'd the Amalekite,
And nobly spar'd fierce Agag and his flocks?
'Tis past! the light of Israel now is quench'd:
Shorn of his beams, my sun of glory sets!
Rise Moab, Edom, angry Ammon rise!
Come, Gaza, Ashdod come! let Ekron boast,
And Askelon rejoice, for Saul is—nothing.

ABNER.

I bring thee news, O king!

SAUL.

My valiant uncle!

What can avail thy news? A soul oppress'd
Refuses still to hear the charmer's voice,
Howe'er enticingly he charm. What news
Can sooth my sickly soul, while Gath's fell giant
Repeats each morning to my frighten'd hosts
His daring challenge, none accepting it?

ABNER.

It is accepted.

SAUL.

Ha! by whom? how? when?
What prince, what gen'ral, what illustrious hero,
What vet'ran chief, what warrior of renown,
Will dare to meet the haughty foe's defiance?
Speak, my brave gen'ral! noble Abner, speak!

ABNER.

No prince, no warrior, no illustrious chief,
No vet'ran hero dares accept the challenge?
But what will move thy wonder, mighty king,
One train'd to peaceful deeds, and new to arms,
A simple shepherd swain!

SAUL.

Oh mockery!
No more of this slight tale, it suits but ill
Thy bearded gravity; or rather tell it
To credulous age, or weak believing women;
They love whate'er is marvellous, and dote
On deeds prodigious and incredible,
Which sober sense rejects. I laugh to think
Of thy extravagance. A shepherd's boy,
Encounter him whom nations dread to meet!

ABNER.

Is valour, then, peculiar to high birth?
If Heav'n had so decreed, know, scornful king,
That Saul the Benjamite had never reign'd.
No! glory darts her soul-pervading ray
On thrones and cottages, regardless still
Of all the artificial nice distinctions
Vain human customs make.

SAUL.

Where is this youth?

ABNER.

Without thy tent he waits. Such humble sweet-
ness,
Fir'd with the secret conscience of desert;

Such manly bearing, temper'd with such softness,
And so adorn'd with ev'ry outward charm
Of graceful form and feature, saw I never.

SAUL.

Bring me the youth.

ABNER.

He waits thy royal pleasure.
[*Exit Abner.*]

SAUL.

What must I think? Abner himself is brave,
And skill'd in humankind: nor does he judge
So lightly, to be caught with specious words
And Fraud's smooth artifice, were there not marks
Of worth intrinsic. But, behold, he comes;
The youth too with him! Justly did he praise
The candour which adorns his open brow.

Re-enter ABNER and DAVID.

DAVID.

Hail, mighty king!

ABNER.

Behold thy proffer'd champion!

SAUL.

Art thou the youth whose high heroic zeal
Aspires to meet the giant son of Anak?

DAVID.

If so the king permit.

SAUL.

Impossible!

Why, what experience has thy youth of arms?
Where, stripling, didst *thou* learn the trade of war

Beneath what hoary vet'ran hast *thou* serv'd?
What feats hast *thou* achiev'd, what daring deeds?
What well-rang'd phalanx, say, what charging hosts,
What hard campaigns, what sieges hast thou seen?
Hast thou e'er scal'd the city's rampir'd wall,
Or hurl'd the missile dart, or learn'd to poise
The warrior's deathful spear? The use of targe,
Of helm, and buckler, is to thee unknown.

DAVID.

Arms I have seldom seen. I little know
Of war's proud discipline. The trumpet's clang,
The shock of charging hosts, the rampir'd wall,
The embattled phalanx, and the warrior's spear,
The use of targe and helm to me is new,
My zeal for God, my patriot love of Israel,
My rev'rence for my king, behold my claims!

SAUL.

But, gentle youth, thou hast no fame in arms.
Renown, with her shrill clarion, never bore
Thy honour'd name to many a land remote;
From the fair regions where Euphrates laves
Assyria's borders to the distant Nile.

DAVID.

True, mighty king! I am indeed alike
Unbless'd by Fortune, and to Fame unknown;
A lowly shepherd swain of Judah's tribe:
But greatness ever springs from low beginnings.
That very Nile thou mention'st, whose broad stream
Bears fruitfulness and health through many a clime,

From an unknown, penurious, scanty source
Took its first rise. The forest oak, which shades
Thy sultry troops in many a toilsome march,
Once an unheeded acorn lay. O king!
Who ne'er begins can never aught achieve
Of glorious. Thou thyself was once unknown,
Till fair occasion brought thy worth to light.
Far higher views inspire my youthful heart
Than human praise: I seek to vindicate
The insulted honour of the God I serve.

ABNER.

'Tis nobly said.

SAUL.

I love thy spirit, youth:
But dare not trust thy inexperienced arm
Against a giant's might. The sight of blood,
Though brave thou feel'st when peril is not nigh,
Will pale thy ardent cheek.

DAVID.

Not so, O king!
This youthful arm has been imbru'd in blood,
Though yet no blood of man has ever stain'd it.
Thy servant's occupation is a shepherd.
With jealous care I watch'd my father's flock:
A brindled lion and a furious bear
Forth from the thicket rush'd upon the fold,
Seiz'd a young lamb, and tore their bleating spoil.
Urg'd by compassion for my helpless charge,
I felt a new-born vigour nerve my arm;
And, eager, on the foaming monsters rush'd.

The famish'd lion by his grisly beard,
Enrag'd, I caught, and smote him to the ground.
The panting monster struggling in my gripe,
Shook terribly his bristling mane, and lash'd
His own gaunt, gory sides; fiercely he ground
His gnashing teeth, and roll'd his starting eyes,
Bloodshot with agony; then with a groan,
That wak'd the echoes of the mountain, died.
Nor did his grim associate 'scape my arm;
Thy servant slew the lion and the bear.
I kill'd them both, and bore their shaggy spoils
In triumph home: and shall I fear to meet
The uncircumcis'd Philistine! No: that God,
Who sav'd me from the bear's destructive fang,
And hungry lion's jaw, will not he save me
From this idolater?

SAUL.

He will, he will!

Go, noble youth! be valiant and be bless'd!
The God thou serv'st will shield thee in the fight,
And nerve thy arm with more than mortal strength.

ABNER.

So the bold Nazarite* a lion slew:
An earnest of his victories o'er Philistia!

SAUL.

Go, Abner; see the youth be well equipp'd
With shield and spear. Be it thy care to grace him
With all the fit accoutrements of war.

* Sampson. See Judges xiv.

The choicest mail from my rich armory take,
And gird upon his thigh my own tried sword,
Of noblest temper'd steel.

ABNER.

I shall obey.

DAVID.

Pardon, O king! the coat of plaited mail
These limbs have never known; it would not shield,
'Twould but encumber one who never felt
The weight of armour.

SAUL.

Take thy wish, my son!
Thy sword then, and the God of Jacob guard thee!

PART IV.

Scene—Another Part of the Camp.

DAVID (*kneeling*).

ETERNAL Justice! in whose awful scale
The event of battle hangs! Eternal Truth!
Whose beam illumines all! Eternal Mercy!
If, by thy attributes I may, unblam'd,
Address thee; Lord of Glory! hear me now:
Oh teach these hands to war, these arms to fight!
Thou ever present help in time of need!

Let thy broad mercy, as a shield, defend,
And let thine everlasting arms support me!
Strong in thy strength, in thy protection safe.
Then, though the heathen rage, I shall not fear.
Jehovah, be my buckler! Mighty Lord!
Thou who hast deign'd by humble instruments
To manifest the wonders of thy might,
Be present with me now! 'Tis thine own cause!
Thy wisdom sees events, thy goodness plans
Schemes baffling our conceptions—and 'tis still
Omnipotence which executes the deed
Of high design, though by a feeble arm!
I feel a secret impulse drive me on;
And my soul springs impatient for the fight!
'Tis not the heated spirits, or warm blood
Of sanguine youth with which my bosom burns;
And, though I thirst to meet the insulting foe,
And pant for glory, 'tis not, witness Heav'n!
'Tis not the sinful lust of fading fame,
The perishable praise of mortal man;
His praise I covet, whose applause is Life.

DAVID, ELIAB, ISRAELITES.

ELIAB.

What do I hear? thou truant! thou hast dar'd
E'en to the awful presence of the king
Bear thy presumption!

DAVID.

He who fears the Lord
Shall boldly stand before the face of kings,
And shall not be asham'd.

ELIAB.

But what wild dream
Has urg'd thee to this deed of desp'rate rashness?
Thou mean'st, so I have learn'd, to meet Goliath,
His single arm to thine.

DAVID.

'Tis what I purpose,
E'en on this spot. Each moment I expect
His wish'd approach.

ELIAB.

Go home; return, for shame!
Nor madly draw destruction on thy head.
Thy doating father, when thy shepherd's coat,
Drench'd in thy blood, is brought him, will lament,
And rend his furrow'd cheek, and silver hair,
As if some mighty loss had touch'd his age:
And mourn, even as the partial patriarch mourn'd
When Joseph's bloody garment he receiv'd
From his less dear, not less deserving sons.
But whence that glitt'ring ornament which hangs
Useless upon thy thigh?

DAVID.

'Tis the king's gift.
But thou art right; it suits not me, my brother!
Nor sword I mean to use, nor spear to poise,
Lest men should say I put my trust in arms,
Not in the Lord of Hosts.

ELIAB.

Then thou, indeed,
Art bent to seek thy death?

DAVID.

And what is death?

Is it so terrible to die, my brother?
Or grant it terrible, is it for that
The less inevitable? If, indeed,
We could by stratagem elude the blow,
When some high duty calls us forth to die,
And thus for ever shun it, and escape
The universal lot,—then fond self-love,
Then cautious prudence, boldly might produce
Their fine-spun arguments, their learn'd harangues,
Their cobweb arts, their phrase sophistical,
Their subtle doubts, and all the specious trick
Of selfish cunning lab'ring for its end.
But since, howe'er protracted, death will come,
Why fondly study, with ingenious pains,
To put it off?—To breathe a little longer
Is to defer our fate, but not to shun it.
Small gain! which Wisdom with indiff'rent eye
Beholds. Why wish to drink the bitter dregs
Of life's exhausted chalice, whose last runnings,
Ev'n at the best, are vapid? Why not die
(If Heav'n so will) in manhood's op'ning bloom,
When all the flush of life is gay about us;
When sprightly youth, with many a new-born joy,
Solicits every sense? So may we then
Present a sacrifice, unmeet indeed,
(Ah, how unmeet!) but less unworthy far,
Than the world's leavings; than a worn-out heart,
By vice unfeebled, and by vain desires
Sunk and exhausted!

ELIAB.

Hark! I hear a sound
Of multitudes approaching!

DAVID.

'Tis the giant!
I see him not, but hear his measur'd pace.

ELIAB.

Look, where his pond'rous shield is borne before
him!

DAVID.

Like a broad moon its ample disk portends.
But soft!—what unknown prodigy appears?
A moving mountain cas'd in polish'd brass!

ELIAB (*getting behind* DAVID.)

How's this? thou dost not tremble. Thy firm joints
Betray no fear; thy accents are not broken;
Thy cheek retains its red; thine eye its lustre!
He comes more near! Dost thou not fear him now?

DAVID.

No.

The vast colossal statue nor inspires
Respect nor fear. Mere magnitude of form,
Without proportion'd intellect and valour,
Strikes not my soul with rev'rence or with awe.

ELIAB.

Near and more near he comes! I hold it rash
To stay so near him, and expose a life
Which may, hereafter, serve the state. Farewell.
Exit.

[*GOLIATH advances, clad in complete Armour. One bearing his Shield precedes him. The opposing Armies are seen at a Distance, drawn upon each Side of the Valley. GOLIATH begins to speak before he comes on. DAVID stands in the same Place with an air of indifference.*]

GOLIATH.

Where is the mighty man of war, who dares
Accept the challenge of Philistia's chief?
What victor king, what gen'ral drench'd in blood,
Claims this high privilege? What are his rights?
What proud credentials does the boaster bring
To prove his claim? What cities laid in ashes?
What ruin'd provinces? What slaughter'd realms?
What heads of heroes, and what hearts of kings,
In battle kill'd, or at his altars slain,
Has he to boast? Is his bright armory
Thick set with spears, and swords, and coats of mail
Of vanquish'd nations, by his single arm
Subdued? Where is the mortal man so bold,
So much a wretch, so out of love with life,
To dare the weight of this uplifted spear,
Which never fell innoxious? Yet I swear,
I grudge the glory to his parting soul
To fall by this right hand. 'Twill sweeten death,
To know he had the honour to contend
With the dread son of Anak. Latest time,
From blank oblivion, shall retrieve *his* name
Who dar'd to perish in unequal fight
With Gath's triumphant champion. Come, advance.

Philistia's gods to Israel's. Sound, my herald—
Sound for the battle straight.

[Herald sounds the Trumpet.]

DAVID.

Behold thy foe!

GOLIATH.

I see him not.

DAVID.

Behold him here!

GOLIATH.

Say, where!

Direct my sight. I do not war with boys.

DAVID.

I stand prepar'd: thy single arm to mine.

GOLIATH.

Why this is mockery, minion! it may chance
To cost thee dear. Sport not with things above thee!
But tell me who of all this num'rous host
Expects his death from me? Which is the man
Whom Israel sends to meet my bold defiance?

DAVID.

The election of my sov'reign falls on me.

GOLIATH.

On thee! on thee! By Dagon, 'tis too much!
Thou curled minion! thou a nation's champion!
'Twould move my mirth at any other time;
But trifling's out of tune. Be gone, light boy!
And tempt me not too far.

DAVID.

I do defy thee,

Thou foul idolater! Hast thou not scorn'd
The armies of the living God I serve?
By me he will avenge upon thy head
Thy nation's sins and thine. Arm'd with his name,
Unshrinking, I dare meet the stoutest foe
That ever bath'd his hostile spear in blood.

GOLIATH (*ironically*).

Indeed! 'tis wondrous well. Now, by my gods,
The stripling plays the orator! Vain boy!
Keep close to that same bloodless war of words,
And thou shalt still be safe. Tongue-valiant warrior!
Where is thy silvan crook, with garlands hung,
Of idle field-flowers? Where thy wanton harp,
Thou dainty-finger'd hero? better strike
Its notes lascivious, or the lulling lute
Touch softly, than provoke the trumpet's rage.
I will not stain the honour of my spear
With thy inglorious blood. Shall that fair cheek
Be scarr'd with wounds unseemly? Rather go
And hold fond dalliance with the Syrian maids;
To wanton measures dance, and let them braid
The bright luxuriance of thy golden hair;
They for their lost Adonis may mistake
Thy dainty form.

DAVID.

Peace, thou unhallow'd railer!

Oh, tell it not in Gath, nor let the sound
Reach Askelon, how once your slaughter'd lords

By mighty Sampson* found one common grave:
When his broad shoulders the firm pillars heav'd,
And to its base the tott'ring fabric shook.

GOLIATH.

Insulting boy! perhaps thou hast not heard
The infamy of that inglorious day,
When your weak hosts at Eben-ezer† pitch'd
Their quick-abandon'd tents? Then, when your ark,
Your talisman, your charm, your boasted pledge
Of safety and success, was tamely lost!
And yet not tamely, since by me 'twas won.
When with this good right arm I thinn'd your ranks,
And bravely crush'd, beneath a single blow,
The chosen guardians of this vaunted shrine,
Hophni‡ and Phineas. The fam'd ark itself
I bore to Ashdod.

DAVID.

I remember too,
Since thou provok'st the unwelcome truth, how all
Your blushing priests beheld their idol's shame;
When prostrate Dagon fell before the ark,
And your frail god was shiver'd. Then Philistia,
Idolatrous Philistia, flew for succour
To Israel's help; and all her smitten nobles
Confess'd the Lord was God; and the bless'd ark,
Gladly, with reverential awe restor'd.

* Judges xvi.

† 1 Samuel v.

‡ Commentators say, that the Chaldee Paraphrase makes Goliath boast that he had killed Hophni and Phineas, and taken the ark prisoner.

GOLIATH.

By Ashdod's fane thou liest. Now will I meet thee,
Thou insect warrior, since thou dar'st me thus!
Already I behold thy mangled limbs,
Dissever'd each from each, ere long to feed
The fierce blood-snuffing vulture. Mark me well,
Around my spear I'll twist thy shining locks,
And toss in air thy head all gash'd with wounds,
Thy lip yet quiv'ring with the dire convulsion
Of recent death!—Art thou not terrified?

DAVID.

No:

True courage is not mov'd by breath of words:
While the rash bravery of boiling blood,
Impetuous, knows no settled principle.
A fev'rish tide, it has its ebbs and flows,
As spirits rise or fall, as wine inflames,
Or circumstances change: But inborn courage,
The gen'rous child of Fortitude and Faith,
Holds its firm empire in the constant soul;
And like the stedfast pole-star, never once
From the same fix'd and faithful point declines.

GOLIATH.

The curses of Philistia's gods be on thee!
This fine-drawn speech is meant to lengthen out
That life thy words pretend to scorn.

DAVID.

Ha! say'st thou so? Come on then. Mark us well.

Thou com'st to me with sword, and spear, and shield;—

In the dread name of Israel's God I come;
The living Lord of Hosts, whom thou defy'st!
Yet though no shield I bring, no arms, except
These five smooth stones I gather'd from the brook,
With such a simple sling as shepherds use,—
Yet all expos'd, defenceless as I am,
The God I serve shall give thee up a prey
To my victorious arm. This day I mean
To make the uncircumcised tribes confess
There is a God in Israel. I will give thee,
Spite of thy vaunted strength and giant bulk,
To glut the carrion kites. Nor thee alone;
The mangled carcasses of your thick hosts
Shall spread the plains of Elah, till Philistia,
Through all her trembling tents and flying bands,
Shall own that Judah's God is God indeed!
—I dare thee to the trial.

GOLIATH.

Follow me—

In this good spear I trust.

DAVID.

I trust in Heav'n!

The God of battle stimulates my arm,
And fires my soul with ardour not its own.

PART V.

SCENE—*The Tent of SAUL.*

SAUL (*rising from his Couch*).

OH! that I knew the black and midnight arts
Of wizard sorcery! that I could call
The slumb'ring spirit from the shades of hell!
Or, like Chaldean sages, could foreknow
The event of things unacted! I might then
Anticipate my fortune. How I'm fallen!
The sport of vain chimeras, the weak slave
Of Fear and Fancy; coveting to know
The arts obscene, which foul diviners use.
Thick blood and moping melancholy lead
To baleful Superstition—that fell fiend,
Whose with'ring charms blast the fair bloom of virtue.
Why did my wounded pride, with scorn reject
The wholesome truths which holy Samuel told me?
Why drive him from my presence? he might now
Raise my sunk soul, and my benighted mind
Enlighten with Religion's cheering ray.
He dar'd to menace me with loss of empire;
And I, for that bold honesty, dismiss'd him.
“Another shall possess thy throne,” he cried:
“A stranger!” This unwelcome prophecy

Has lin'd my crown and strew'd my couch with thorns.
 Each ray of op'ning merit I discern
 In friend or foe, distracts my troubled soul,
 Lest he should prove my rival. But this morn,
 Ev'n my young champion, lovely as he look'd
 In blooming valour, struck me to the soul
 With Jealousy's barb'd dart. O Jealousy,
 Thou ugliest fiend of hell! thy deadly venom
 Preys on my vitals, turns the healthful hue
 Of my fresh cheek to haggard sallowness,
 And drinks my spirit up!

[*A flourish of Trumpets, shouting, &c.*

What sounds are those?

The combat is decided. Hark! again
 Those shouts proclaim it! Now, O God of Jacob,
 If yet thou hast not quite withdrawn from Saul
 Thy light and favour, prosper me this once!
 But Abner comes! I dread to hear his tale!
 Fair Hope, with smiling face but ling'ring foot,
 Has long deceiv'd me.

ABNER.

King of Israel, hail!

Now thou art king indeed. The youth has conquer'd:

Goliath's dead.

SAUL.

Oh speak thy tale again,
 Lest my fond ears deceive me!

ABNER.

Thy young champion
 Has slain the giant.

SAUL.

Then God is gracious still,
In spite of my offences! But, good Abner!
How was it? Tell me all. Where is my champion?
Quick let me press him to my grateful heart,
And pay him a king's thanks. And yet, who knows,
This forward friend may prove an active foe?
No more of that. Tell me the whole, brave Abner!
And paint the glorious acts of my young hero!

ABNER.

Full in the centre of the camp they stood!
The opposing armies rang'd on either side
In proud array. The haughty giant stalk'd
Stately across the valley. Next, the youth
With modest confidence advanc'd. Nor pomp,
Nor gay parade, nor martial ornament,
His graceful form adorn'd. Goliath straight,
With solemn state, began the busy work
Of dreadful preparation. In one place
His closely joined mail an op'ning left
For air, and only one: the watchful youth
Mark'd that the beaver of his helm was up.
Mean while the giant such a blow devis'd
As would have crush'd him. This the youth perceiv'd
And from his well-directed sling quick hurl'd,
With dext'rous aim, a stone, which sunk, deep
lodg'd,
In the capacious forehead of the foe.
Then with a cry, as loud and terrible
As Lybian lions roaring for their young,

Quite stunn'd, the furious giant stagger'd, reel'd,
 And fell: the mighty mass of man fell prone.
 With its own weight his shatter'd bulk was bruise'd ;
 His clatt'ring arms rung dreadful through the field,
 And the firm basis of the solid earth
 Shook. Chok'd with blood and dust he curs'd his
 gods,

And died blaspheming ! Straight the victor youth
 Drew from its sheath the giant's pond'rous sword,
 And from the enormous trunk the gory head
 Furious in death he sever'd. The grim visage
 Look'd threat'ning still, and still frown'd horribly.

SAUL.

O glorious deed ! O valiant conqueror !

ABNER.

The youth so calm appear'd, so nobly firm,
 So cool, yet so intrepid, that these eyes
 Ne'er saw such temp'rate valour so chastis'd
 By modesty.

SAUL.

Thou dwell'st upon his praise
 With needless circumstance. 'Twas nobly done ;
 But others too have fought !

ABNER.

None, none, so bravely.

SAUL.

What follow'd next ?

ABNER.

The shouting Israelites
 On the Philistines rush'd, and still pursued

Their routed remnants. In dismay, their bands
 Disorder'd fly, while shouts of loud acclaim
 Pursue their brave deliverer. Lo, he comes!
 Bearing the giant's head and shining sword,
 His well-earn'd trophies.

SAUL, ABNER, DAVID.

[DAVID bearing GOLIATH'S Head and Sword. He
 kneels, and lays both at SAUL's Feet.]

SAUL.

Welcome to my heart,
 My glorious champion! My deliverer, welcome!
 How shall I speak the swelling gratitude
 Of my full heart! or give thee the high praise
 Thy gallant deeds deserve!

DAVID.

O mighty king!
 Sweet is the breath of praise, when giv'n by those
 Whose own high merit claims the praise they give.
 But let not this one prosperous event,
 By Heav'n directed, be ascrib'd to me;
 I might have fought with equal skill and courage,
 And not have gain'd this conquest; then had shame,
 Harsh obloquy, and foul disgrace, befall'n me:
 But prosp'rous fortune gains the praise of valour.

SAUL.

I like not this. In every thing superior
 He soars above me (*Aside.*)—Modest youth thou'rt
 right.

And fortune, as thou say'st, deserves the praise
 We give to human valour.

DAVID.

Rather say
The God of Hosts deserves it.

SAUL.

Tell me, youth,
What is thy name, and what thy father's house?

DAVID.

My name is David ; Jesse is my sire :
An humble Bethle'mite of Judah's tribe.

SAUL.

David, the son of Jesse! sure that name
Has been familiar to me. Nay, thy voice,
Thy form, and features, I remember too,
Though faint and indistinctly.

ABNER.

In this hero
Behold thy sweet musician ; he whose harp
Expell'd the melancholy fiend, whose pow'r
Enslav'd the spirit.

SAUL.

This the modest youth
Whom, for his skill and virtues, I preferr'd
To bear my armour ?

DAVID.

I am he, O king !

SAUL.

Why this concealment ? tell me, valiant David :
Why didst thou hide thy birth and name till now ?

DAVID.

O king! I would not aught from favour claim,
Or on remember'd services presume;
But on the strength of my own actions stand,
Ungrac'd and unsupported.

ABNER.

Well he merits
The honours which await him. Why, O king,
Dost thou delay to bless his doubting heart
With his well-earn'd rewards? Thy lovely daughter,
By right of conquest his!

SAUL (*to DAVID.*)

True: thou hast won her.
She shall be thine. Yes, a king's word is past.

DAVID.

O boundless blessing! What! shall she be mine,
For whom contending monarchs might renounce
Their slighted crowns?

[*Sounds of musical Instruments heard at a distance.
Shouting and singing. A grand Procession.
Chorus of Hebrew Women.*]

SAUL.

How's this? what sounds of joy
Salute my ears? What means this needless pomp?
This merry sound of tabret and of harp?
What mean these idle instruments of triumph?
These women, who in fair procession move,
Making sweet melody?

ABNER.

To pay due honour
To David, are they come.

SAUL (*aside*).

A rival's praise
Is discord to my ear! They might have spar'd
This idle pageantry; it wounds my soul!

[*Martial Symphony: after which, Chorus of
Women sing.*

Prepare! your festal rites prepare!
Let your triumphs rend the air!
Idol gods shall reign no more:
We the living Lord adore!
Let heathen hosts on human helps repose,
Since Israel's God has routed Israel's foes.

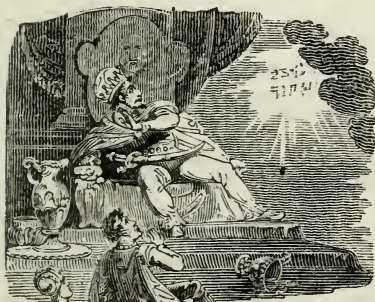
Let remotest nations know
Proud Goliath's overthrow.
Fall'n Philistia, is thy trust,
Dagon mingles with the dust!
Who fears the Lord of Glory, need not fear
The brazen armour, or the-lifted spear.

See, the routed squadrons fly!
Hark! their clamours rend the sky!
Blood and carnage stain the field!
See, the vanquish'd nations yield!
Dismay and terror fill the frighten'd land,
While conqu'ring David routs the trembling band.

Lo! upon the tented field
Royal Saul has thousands kill'd!
Lo! upon th' ensanguin'd plain
David has ten thousands slain!
Let mighty Saul his vanquish'd thousands tell,
While tenfold triumphs David's victories swell,

BELSHAZZAR.

A Sacred Drama.



How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, who didst weaken the nations!

ISAIAH,

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

BELSHAZZAR, *King of Babylon.*

NITOCRIS, *the Queen-Mother.*

Courtiers, Astrologers, Parasites.

DANIEL, *the Jewish Prophet.*

Captive Jews, &c. &c.

SCENE—*Babylon. Time—Night.*

*The Subject is taken from the Fifth Chapter of the
Prophet Daniel.*

BELSHAZZAR.

PART I.

SCENE—Near the Palace of BABYLON.

DANIEL and captive JEWS.

DANIEL.

PARENT of Life and Light! Sole Source of Good!
Whose tender mercies through the tide of time,
In long successive order, have sustain'd,
And sav'd the sons of Israel! Thou, whose pow'r
Deliver'd righteous Noah from the flood,
The whelming flood, the grave of humankind!
O thou, whose guardian care and out-stretch'd hand
Rescu'd young Isaac from the lifted arm,
Rais'd at thy bidding, to devote a son,
An only son, doom'd by his sire to die:
(O saving faith, by such obedience prov'd,
O blest obedience, hallow'd thus by faith!)
Thou, who in mercy sav'dst the chosen race
In the wild desert, and didst there sustain them
By wonder-working love, though they rebell'd
And murmur'd at the miracles that sav'd them!
Oh, hear thy servant Daniel! hear and help!

Thou, whose almighty pow'r did after raise
Successive leaders to defend our race :
Who sentest valiant Joshua to the field,
Thy people's champion, to the conqu'ring field,
Where the revolving planet of the night,
Suspended in her radiant round, was stay'd,
And the bright sun, arrested in his course,
Stupendously stood still !

CHORUS of JEWS.

What ailed thee, that thou stood'st still,
O Sun! nor did thy flaming orb decline ?
And thou, O Moon! in Ajalon's low vale,
Why didst thou long before thy period shine ?

Was it at Joshua's dread command,
The leader of the Israelitish band ?
Yes—at a mortal bidding both stood still :
'Twas Joshua's word, but 'twas Jehovah's will.

What all-controlling hand had force
To stop eternal Nature's constant course ?
The wand'ring moon to one fix'd spot confine,
But his whose fiat gave them first to shine

DANIEL.

O Thou! who, when thy discontented host,
Tir'd of Jehovah's rule, desir'd a king,
In anger gav'st them Saul; and then again
Didst wrest the regal sceptre from his hand
To give it David—David best belov'd!
Illustrious David! poet, prophet, king!
Thou who didst suffer Solomon, the wise,
To build a glorious temple to thy name,—

O hear thy servants, and forgive us too !
If by severe necessity compell'd,
We worship here—we have no temple now :
Altar or sanctuary, none is left.

CHORUS of JEWS.

O Judah ! let thy captive sons deplore
Thy far-fam'd temple's now no more !
Fall'n is thy sacred fane, thy glory gone !
Fall'n is thy temple, Solomon !
Ne'er did Barbaric kings behold,
With all their shining gems, their burnish'd gold,
A fane so perfect, bright, and fair ;
For God himself was wont to inhabit there.
Between the cherubim his glory stood,
While the high-priest alone the dazzling splendour
view'd.
How fondly did the Tyrian artist strive
His name to latest time should live !
Such wealth the stranger wonder'd to behold :
Gold were the tablets, and the vases gold.
Of cedar such an ample store,
Exhausted Lebanon could yield no more.
Bending before the Ruler of the sky,
Well might the royal founder cry,
Fill'd with an holy dread, a rev'rend fear,
Will God in very deed inhabit here ?
The heav'n of heav'ns beneath his feet,
Is for the bright inhabitant unmeet :
Archangels prostrate wait his high commands,
And will he deign to dwell in temples made with
hands ?

DANIEL.

Yes, thou art ever present, Pow'r supreme !
Not circumscrib'd by time, nor fix'd to space,
Confin'd to altars, nor to temples bound.
In wealth, in want, in freedom or in chains,
In dungeons, or on thrones, the faithful find thee !
E'en in the burning cauldron thou wast near
To Shadrach and the holy brotherhood :
The unhurt martyrs bless'd thee in the flames ;
They sought and found thee ; call'd, and thou wast
there.

FIRST JEW.

How chang'd our state ! Judah, thy glôry's fall'n,
Thy joys for hard captivity exchange'd ;
And thy sad sons breathe the polluted air
Of Babylon, where deities obscene
Insult the living God ; and to his servants,
The priests of wretched idols made with hands,
Show contumelious scorn.

DANIEL.

'Tis Heav'n's high will.

SECOND JEW.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem !
If I not fondly cherish thy lov'd image,
E'en in the giddy hour of thoughtless mirth :
If I not rather view thy prostrate walls,
Than haughty Babylon's imperial tow'rs,—
Then may my tongue refuse to frame the strains
Of sweetest harmony ; my rude right hand
Forget, with sounds symphonious, to accord
The harp of Jesse's son to Sion's songs.

FIRST JEW.

Oft on Euphrates' ever verdant banks,
Where drooping willows form a mournful shade,
With all the pride which prosp'rous fortunes give,
And all the unfeeling mirth of happy men,
The insulting Babylonians ask a song ;
Such songs as erst in better days were sung,
By Korah's sons, or heav'n-taught Asaph set
To loftiest measures ; then our bursting hearts
Feel all their woes afresh ; the galling chain
Of bondage crushes then the free-born soul.
With wringing anguish ; from the trembling lip
The unfinish'd cadence falls ; and the big tear,
While it relieves, betrays the woe-fraught soul.
For who can view Euphrates' pleasant stream,
Its drooping willows, and its verdant banks,
And not to wounded memory recall
The piny groves of fertile Palestine,
The vales of Solyma, and Jordan's stream !

DANIEL.

Firm faith and deep submission to high Heav'n
Will teach us to endure, without a murmur,
What seems so hard. Think what the holy host
Of patriarchs, saints, and prophets have sustain'd,
In the blest cause of truth ! And shall not we,
O men of Judah, dare what these have dar'd,
And boldly pass through the refining fire
Of fierce affliction ? Yes, be witness Heav'n !
Old as I am, I will not shrink at death,
Come in what shape it may, if God so will,
By peril to confirm and prove my faith.

Oh! I would dare yon den of hungry lions,
Rather than pause to fill the task assign'd
By Wisdom Infinite. Nor think I boast,
Not in myself, but in thy strength I trust,
Spirit of God!

FIRST JEW.

Prophet, thy words support
And raise our sinking souls.

DANIEL.

Behold yon palace :
There proud Belshazzar keeps his wanton court !
I knew it once beneath another lord,
His grandsire*, who subdu'd Jehoiachin,
And hither brought sad Judah's captive tribes ;
And with them brought the rich and precious relics
Of our fam'd temple ; all the holy treasure,
The golden vases, and the sacred cups,
Which grac'd, in happier times, the sanctuary.

SECOND JEW.

May He, to whose blest use they were devoted,
Preserve them from pollution ; and once more,
In his own gracious time, restore the temple.

DANIEL.

I, with some favour'd youths of Jewish race,
Was lodg'd in the king's palace, and instructed
In all the various learning of the east ;
But He, on whose great name our fathers call'd,
Preserv'd us from the perils of a court,
Warn'd us to guard our youthful appetites,

* Nebuchadnezzar.

And still with holy fortitude reject
The pamp'ring viands Luxury presented ;
Fell Luxury ! more perilous to youth
Than storms or quicksands, poverty or chains.

SECOND JEW.

He who can guard 'gainst the low baits of sense
Will find Temptation's arrows hurtless strike
Against the brazen shield of Temperance,
For 'tis the inferior appetites enthrall
The man, and quench the immortal light within
him ;
The senses take the soul an easy prey,
And sink the imprison'd spirit into brute.

DANIEL.

Twice*, by the Spirit of God, did I expound
The visions of the king ; his soul was touch'd,
And twice did he repent, and prostrate fall
Before the God of Daniel : yet again,
Pow'r, flatt'ry, and prosperity, undid him,
When from the lofty ramparts of his palace
He view'd the splendours of the royal city,
That magazine of wealth, which proud Euphrate
Wafts from each distant corner of the earth ;
When he beheld the adamantine tow'rs,
The brazen gates, the bulwarks of his strength,
The pendant gardens, Art's stupendous work,
The wonder of the world ! the proud Chaldean,
Mad with the intoxicating fumes which rise,
When uncontroll'd ambition grasps at once

* Daniel ii. and iv.

Dominion absolute and boundless wealth,
Forgot he was a man, forgot his God !
“ This mighty Babylon is mine,” he cried ;
“ *My* wondrous pow’r, *my* godlike arm achiev’d it,
I scorn’d submission ; own no Deity
Above my own.”—While the blasphemer spoke,
The wrath of Heav’n inflicted instant vengeance :
Stripp’d him of that bright reason he abus’d,
And drove him from the cheerful haunts of men,
A naked, wretched, helpless, senseless thing ;
Companion of the brutes, his equals now.

FIRST JEW.

Nor does his impious grandson, proud Belshazzar,
Fall short of his offences ; nay, he wants
The valiant spirit and the active soul
Of his progenitor ; for Pleasure’s slave,
Though bound in silken chains, and only tied
In flowery fetters, seeming light and loose,
Is more subdu’d than the rash casual victim
Of Anger or Ambition ; these indeed
Burn with a fiercer but a short-liv’d fire ;
While Pleasure with a constant flame consumes.
War slays her thousands, but destructive Pleasure,
More fell, more fatal, her ten thousands slays :
The young luxurious king she fondly woos
In ev’ry shape of wanton blandishment ;
With adulation smooth ensnares his soul ;
With love betrays him, and with wine inflames.
She strews her magic poppies o’er his couch,
And with delicious opiates charms him down,
In fatal slumbers bound. Though Babylon

Is now invested by the warlike troops
Of royal Cyrus, Persia's valiant prince ;
Who, in conjunction with the Median king,
Darius, fam'd for conquest, now prepares
To storm the city: not the impending horrors,
Which ever wait a siege, have pow'r to wake,
To thought or sense, the intoxicated king.

DANIEL.

E'en in this night of universal dread,
A mighty army threat'ning at the gates ;
This very night, as if in scorn of danger,
The dissolute Belshazzar holds a feast
Magnificently impious, meant to honour
Belus, the favourite Babylonish idol.
Lewd parasites compose his wanton court,
Whose impious flatt'ries sooth his monstrous
crimes:

They justify his vices and extol
His boastful phrase, as if he were some god.
Whate'er he says, they say ; what he commands,
Implicitly they do ; they echo back
His blasphemies with shouts of loud acclaim ;
And when he wounds the tortur'd ear of Virtue,
They cry—" All hail ! Belshazzar live for ever !"
To-night a thousand nobles fill his hall,
Princes, and all the dames who grace the court :
All but his virtuous mother, sage Nitocris ;
Ah ! how unlike the impious king her son !
She never mingles in the midnight fray,
Nor crowns the guilty banquet with her presence.

The royal fair is rich in ev'ry virtue
Which can adorn the queen or grace the woman.
But for the wisdom of her prudent counsels
This wretched empire had been long undone.
Not fam'd Semiramis, Assyria's pride,
Could boast a brighter mind or firmer soul;
Beneath the gentle reign of Merodach*,
Her royal lord, our nation tasted peace.
Our captive monarch, sad Jehoiachin,
Grown grey in a close prison's horrid gloom,
He freed from bondage; brought the hoary king
To taste once more the long-forgotten sweets
Of liberty and light, sustain'd his age,
Pour'd in his wounds the lenient balm of kindness,
And bless'd his setting hour of life with peace.

[Sound of Trumpets is heard at a distance.]

FIRST JEW.

That sound proclaims the banquet is begun.

SECOND JEW.

Hark ! the licentious uproar grows more loud,
The vaulted roof resounds with shouts of mirth,
And the firm palace shakes ! Retire, my friends !
This madness is not meet for sober ears.
If any of our race were found so near,
'Twould but expose us to the rude attack
Of ribaldry obscene, and impious jests,
From these mad sons of Belial, more inflam'd
To deeds of riot by the wanton feast.

DANIEL.

Here part we then! but when again to meet,
Who knows, save Heav'n? Yet, O my friends! I
feel

An impulse more than human stir my breast :
Rapt in prophetic vision*, I behold
Things hid as yet from mortal sight. I see
The dart of Vengeance tremble in the air,
Ere long to pierce the impious king. E'en now
The desolating Angel stalks abroad,
And brandishes aloft the two-edg'd sword
Of retribution keen; he soon will strike,
And Babylon shall weep as Sion wept.
Pass but a little while, and you shall see
This queen of cities prostrate on the earth.
This haughty mistress of the kneeling world,
How shall she sit dishonour'd in the dust,
In tarnish'd pomp and solitary woe!
How shall she shroud her glories in the dark,
And in opprobrious silence hide her head!
Lament, O virgin daughter of Chaldea!
For thou shalt fall! imperial queen, shalt fall!
No more Sidonian robes shall grace thy limbs.
To purple garments sackcloth shall succeed;
And sordid dust and ashes shall supply
The od'rous nard and cassia. Thou, who said'st
I AM, and there is none beside me: thou,
E'en thou, imperial Babylon, shalt fall!
Thy glory quite eclips'd! The pleasant sound
Of viol and of harp shall charm no more;

* See the Prophecies of Isaiah, chap. xlvii. and others.

Nor song of Syrian damsels shall be heard,
 Responsive, to the lute's luxurious note:
 But the loud bittern's cry, the raven's croak,
 The bat's fell scream, the lonely owl's dull plaint,
 And ev'ry hideous bird, with ominous shriek,
 Shall scare affrighted Silence from thy walls:
 While Desolation, snatching from the hand
 Of Time the scythe of ruin, sits aloft,
 Or stalks in dreadful majesty abroad.
 I see the exterminating fiend advance;
 Ev'n now I see her glare with horrid joy;
 See tow'rs imperial mould'ring at her touch;
 She glances on the broken battlement;
 She eyes the crumbling column, and enjoys
 The work of ages prostrate in the dust:—
 Then, pointing to the mischief she has made,
 Exulting cries,—This once was Babylon!

PART II.

SCENE—The Court of BELSHAZZAR. The KING seated on a magnificent Throne. Princes, Nobles, and Attendants. Ladies of the Court. Music—A superb Banquet.

FIRST COURTIER (*rises and kneels*).

HAIL, mighty king!

SECOND COURTIER.

Belshazzar, live for ever!

THIRD COURTIER.

Sun of the world, and light of kings, all hail!

FOURTH COURTIER.

With lowly rev'rence, such as best becomes
The humblest creatures of imperial power,
Behold a thousand nobles bend before thee!
Princes far-fam'd, and dames of high descent!
Yet all this pride of wealth, this boast of beauty,
Shrinks into nought before thine awful eye!
And lives or dies, as the king frowns or smiles!

BELSHAZZAR.

This is such homage as becomes your love,
And suits the mighty monarch of mankind.

FIFTH COURTIER.

The bending world should prostrate thus before
thee;
And pay not only praise but adoration!

BELSHAZZAR (*rises and comes forward*).

Let dull Philosophy preach self-denial;
Let envious Poverty and snarling Age
Proudly declaim against the joys they know not.
Let the deluded Jews, who fondly hope
Some fancied heav'n hereafter, mortify,
And lose the actual blessings of this world
To purchase others which may never come.
Our gods may promise less, but give us more.
Ill could my ardent spirit be content
With meagre abstinence and hungry hope.
Let those misjudging Israelites, who want
The nimble spirits and the active soul,

Call their blunt feelings virtue: let them drudge,
In regular progression, through the round
Of formal duty and of daily toil;
And, when they want the genius to be happy,
Believe their harsh austerity is goodness.
If there be gods, they meant we should enjoy:
Why give us else these tastes and appetites?
And why the means to crown them with indul-
gence?
To burst the feeble bonds which hold the vulgar,
Is noble daring.

FIRST COURTIER.

And is therefore worthy
The high imperial spirit of Belshazzar.

SECOND COURTIER.

Behold a banquet, which the gods might share!

BELSHAZZAR.

To-night, my friends, your monarch shall be blest
With ev'ry various joy; to-night is ours;
Nor shall the envious gods, who view our bliss,
And sicken as they view, to-night disturb us.
Bring all the richest spices of the east;
The od'rous cassia and the drooping myrrh,
The liquid amber and the fragrant gums,
Rob Gilead of its balms, Belshazzar bids;
And leave the Arabian groves without an odour.
Bring freshest flow'rs, exhaust the blooming spring,
Twine the green myrtle with the short-liv'd rose;
And ever, as the blushing garland fades,
We'll learn to snatch the fugitive delight,

And grasp the flying joy ere it escape us.
Come—fill the smiling goblet for the king ;
Belshazzar will not let a moment pass
Unmark'd by some enjoyment ! The full bowl
Let every guest partake !

[Courtiers kneel and drink.]

FIRST COURTIER.

Here's to the king !
Light of the world, and glory of the earth,
Whose word is fate !

BELSHAZZAR.

Yes ; we are likest gods
When we have pow'r, and use it. What is wealth
But the rich means to gratify desire ?
I will not have a wish, a hope, a thought,
That shall not know fruition. What is empire ?
The privilege to punish and enjoy ;
To feel our pow'r in making others fear it ;
To taste of Pleasure's cup till we grow giddy,
And think ourselves immortal ! This is empire !
My ancestors scarce tasted of its joys :
Shut from the sprightly world and all its charms,
In cumbrous majesty, in sullen state,
And dull unsocial dignity they liv'd ;
Far from the sight of an admiring world,
That world, whose gaze makes half the charms of
greatness ;
They nothing knew of empire but the name,
Or saw it in the looks of trembling slaves ;
And all they felt of royalty was care.
But I will see and know it of myself ;

Youth, Wealth, and Greatness, court me to be blest;
 And Pow'r and Pleasure draw with equal force
 And sweet attraction: both I will embrace
 In quick succession; this is Pleasure's day;
 Ambition will have time to reign hereafter;
 It is the proper appetite of age.
 The lust of Power shall lord it uncontroll'd,
 When all the gen'rous feelings grow obtuse,
 And stern Dominion holds, with rigid hand,
 His iron rein, and sits and sways alone.
 But youth is Pleasure's hour!

FIRST COURTIER.

Perish the slave

Who, with officious counsel, would oppose
 The king's desire, whose slightest wish is law!

BELSHAZZAR.

Now strike the loud-ton'd lyre and softer lute;
 Let me have music, with the nobler aid
 Of poesy. Where are those cunning men
 Who boast, by chosen sounds and measur'd sweetness,
 To set the busy spirits in a flame,
 And cool them at their will? who know the art
 To call the hidden pow'rs of numbers forth,
 And make that pliant instrument, the Mind,
 Yield to the pow'rful sympathy of sound,
 Obedient to the master's artful hand?
 Such magic is in song! Then give me song;
 Yet not at first such soul-dissolving strains
 As melt the soften'd sense; but such bold measures
 As may inflame my spirit to despise

The ambitious Persian: that presumptuous boy,
 Who rashly dares e'en now invest our city,
 And menaces the invincible Belshazzar.

[*A grand Concert of Music, after which an Ode.*

In vain shall Persian Cyrus dare
 With great Belshazzar wage unequal war:
 In vain Darius shall combine,
 Darius leader of the Median line;
 While fair Euphrates' stream our wall protects,
 And great Belshazzar's self our fate directs.

War and famine threat in vain,
 While this demi-god shall reign!
 Let Persia's prostrate king confess his pow'r,
 And Media's monarch dread his vengeful hour.

On Dura's* ample plain behold
 Immortal Belus†, whom the nations own;
 Sublime he stands in burnish'd gold,
 And richest offerings his bright altars crown.
 To-night his deity we here adore,
 And due libations speak his mighty pow'r.

Yet Belus' self not more we own
 Than great Belshazzar on Chaldea's throne.

* Dauiel iii.

† See a very fine description of the Temple of this Idol.

———The tow'ring fane
 Of Bel, Chaldean Jove, surpassing far
 That Doric Temple, which the Elean chiefs
 Rais'd to their thunder from the spoils of war;
 Or that Ionic, where the Ephesian bow'd
 To Dian, queen of heav'n. Eight towers arise,
 Each above each, immeasurable height,
 A monument at once of eastern pride,
 And slavish superstition, &c. *Judah Restored.*

Great Belshazzar, like a god,
 Rules the nations with a nod!
 To great Belshazzar be the goblet crown'd!
 Belshazzar's name the echoing roofs rebound!

BELSHAZZAR.

Enough! the kindling rapture fires my brain,
 And my heart dances to the flatt'ring sounds.
 I feel myself a god! Why not a god?
 What were the deities our fathers worshipp'd?
 What was great Nimrod, our imperial founder?
 What greater Belus, to whose pow'r divine
 We raise to-night the banquet and the song;
 But youthful heroes, mortal, like myself,
 Who by their daring earn'd divinity?
 They were but men: nay, some were less than men,
 Though now rever'd as gods. What was Anubis,
 Whom Egypt's sapient sons adore? A dog!
 And shall not I, young, valiant, and a king,
 Dare more? do more? exceed the boldest flights
 Of my progenitors?—Fill me more wine,
 To cherish and exalt the young idea! (*He drinks*)
 Ne'er did Olympian Jupiter himself
 Quaff such immortal draughts.

FIRST COURTIER.

What could that Canaan,
 That heaven in hope, that nothing in possession,
 That air-built bliss of the deluded Jews,
 That promis'd land of milk and flowing honey;
 What could that fancy'd Paradise bestow
 To match these generous juices?

BELSHAZZAR.

Hold—enough!

Thou hast rous'd a thought. By Heav'n, I will
enjoy it:

A glorious thought! which will exalt to rapture
The pleasures of the banquet, and bestow
A yet untasted relish of delight.

FIRST COURTIER.

What means the king?

BELSHAZZAR.

The Jews? said'st thou the Jews?

FIRST COURTIER.

I spoke of that undone, that outcast people,
Those tributary creatures of thy pow'r,
The captives of thy will, whose very breath
Hangs on the sovereign pleasure of the king.

BELSHAZZAR.

When that abandon'd race was hither brought,
Were not the choicest treasures of their temple
(Devoted to their God, and held most precious),
Among the spoils which grac'd Nebassar's* tri-
umph,
And lodg'd in Babylon?

FIRST COURTIER.

O king! they were.

SECOND COURTIER.

The Jews, with superstitious awe, behold

* The name of Nebuchadnezzar not being reducible to verse, I have adopted that of Nebassar, on the authority of the ingenious and learned author of *Judah Restored*.

These sacred symbols of their ancient faith :
 Nor has captivity abated aught
 The rev'rend love they bear these holy relics.
 Though we deride their law, and scorn their persons,
 Yet never have we yet to human use
 Devoted these rich vessels, set apart
 To sacred purposes.

BELSHAZZAR.

I joy to hear it!
 Go—fetch them hither. They shall grace our banquet.
 Does no one stir? Belshazzar disobey'd!
 And yet you live? Whence comes this strange reluctance?
 This new-born rev'rence for the helpless Jews?
 This fear to injure those who can't revenge it?
 Send to the sacred treasury in haste,
 Let all be hither brought;—who answers dies.

[They go out.]

The mantling wine a higher joy will yield,
 Pour'd from the precious flaggons which adorn'd
 Their far-fam'd temple, now in ashes laid.
 Oh! 'twill exalt the pleasure into transport,
 To gall those whining, praying Israelites!
 I laugh to think what wild dismay will seize them,
 When they shall learn the use that has been made
 Of all their holy trumpery!

[The Vessels are brought in.]

SECOND COURTIER.

It comes;
 A goodly show! how bright with gold and gems!

Far fitter for a youthful monarch's board
Than the cold shrine of an unheeding God.

BELSHAZZAR.

Fill me that massy goblet to the brim.
Now, Abraham! let thy wretched race expect
The fable of their faith to be fulfill'd;
Their second temple and their promis'd king;
Now will they see the God they vainly serve
Is impotent to help; for had he pow'r
To hear and grant their pray'r, he would prevent
This profanation.

[*As the King is going to drink, Thunder is heard ;
he starts from the Throne, spies a Hand, which
writes on the Wall these Words, MENE, MENE,
TEKEL, UPHARSIN. He lets fall the Goblet,
and stands in an Attitude of speechless Horror.
All start and seem terrified.*]

FIRST COURTIER (*after a long Pause*).

Oh, transcendant horror!

SECOND COURTIER.

What may this mean? The king is greatly mov'd!

THIRD COURTIER.

Nor is it strange—who unappall'd can view it?
Those sacred cups! I doubt we've gone too far!

FIRST COURTIER.

Observe the fear-struck king! his starting eyes
Roll horribly. Thrice he essay'd to speak,
And thrice his tongue refus'd.

BELSHAZZAR (*in a low trembling Voice*).

Ye mystic words!

Thou semblance of an hand! illusive forms!
Ye wild fantastic images! what are ye?
Dread shadows, speak! Explain your dark intent!
Ye will not answer me—Alas! I feel
I am a mortal now—My failing limbs
Refuse to bear me up. I am no god!
Gods do not tremble thus—Support me, hold me!
These loosen'd joints, these knees which smite each
other,
Betray I'm but a man—a weak one too!

FIRST COURTIER.

In truth 'tis passing strange, and full of horror?

BELSHAZZAR.

Send for the learn'd magicians, every sage
Who deals in wizard spells and magic charms.
[*Some go out.*]

FIRST COURTIER.

How fares my lord the king?

BELSHAZZAR.

Am I a king?
What pow'r have I? Ye lying slaves, I am not.
Oh, soul-distracting sight! but is it real?
Perhaps 'tis fancy all, or the wild dream
Of mad distemperature, the fumes of wine!
I'll look upon't no more!—So—now I'm well!
I am a king again, and know not fear:
And yet my eyes will seek that fatal spot,
And fondly dwell upon the sight that blasts them!
Again, 'tis there! it is not Fancy's work,
I see it still! 'tis written on the wall!

I see the writing, but the viewless writer,
Who? what is he? Oh, horror! horror! horror!
It cannot be the God of these poor Jews;
For what is he, that he can thus afflict?

SECOND COURTIER.

Let not my lord the king be thus dismay'd.

THIRD COURTIER.

Let not a phantom, an illusive shade,
Disturb the peace of him who rules the world.

BELSHAZZAR.

No more, ye wretched sycophants! no more!
The sweetest note which flatt'ry now can strike,
Harsh and discordant grates upon my soul.
Talk not of pow'r to one so full of fear,
So weak, so impotent! Look on that wall;
If thou wouldst sooth my soul, explain the writing,
And thou shalt be my oracle, my god!
Oh, tell me whence it came, and what it means,
And I'll believe I am again a king!
Friends! princes! ease my troubled breast, and say,
What do the mystic characters portend?

FIRST COURTIER.

'Tis not in us, O king, to ease thy spirit,
We are not skill'd in those mysterious arts
Which wait the midnight studies of the sage:
But of the deep diviners thou shalt learn,
The wise astrologers, the sage magicians,
Who, of events unborn, take secret note,
And hold deep commerce with the unseen world.

Enter Astrologers, Magicians, &c. &c.

BELSHAZZAR.

Approach, ye sages, 'tis the king commands!

[*They kneel.*]

ASTROLOGERS.

Hail, mighty king of Babylon!

BELSHAZZAR.

Nay, rise:

I do not need your homage, but your help;
The world may worship, you must counsel me.
He who declares the secret of the king,
No common honours shall await his skill;
Our empire shall be tax'd for his reward,
And he himself shall name the gift he wishes.
A splendid scarlet robe shall grace his limbs,
His neck a princely chain of gold adorn:
Meet honours for such wisdom: he shall rule
The third in rank throughout our Babylon.

SECOND ASTROLOGER.

Such recompense becomes Belshazzar's bounty.
Let the king speak the secret of his soul;
Which heard, his humble creatures shall unfold.

BELSHAZZAR (*points to the Wall*).

Be't so—look there—behold those characters!
Nay, do not start, for I well know their meaning!
Ha! answer; speak, or instant death awaits you!
What, dumb! all dumb! where is your boasted
skill? [*They confer together.*]
Keep them asunder—no confederacy—

No secret plots to make your tales agree.
Speak, slaves, and dare to let me know the worst!
[*They kneel.*]

FIRST ASTROLOGER.

Oh, let the king forgive his faithful servants!

SECOND ASTROLOGER.

Oh, mitigate our threaten'd doom of death;
If we declare, with mingled grief and shame,
We cannot tell the secret of the king,
Nor what these mystic characters portend!

BELSHAZZAR.

Off with their heads! Ye shall not live an hour!
Curse on your shallow arts, your lying science!
'Tis thus you practice on the credulous world,
Who think you wise because themselves are weak!
But, miscreants, ye shall die! the pow'r to punish
Is all that I have left me of a king.

FIRST COURTIER.

Great sire, suspend their punishment awhile,
Behold Nitocris comes, thy royal mother!

Enter NITOCRIS.

NITOCRIS.

O my misguided son!
Well may'st thou wonder to behold me here:
For I have ever shunn'd this scene of riot,
Where wild intemperance and dishonour'd mirth
Hold festival impure. Yet, O Belshazzar!
I could not hear the wonders which befel,

And leave thee to the workings of despair :
For, spite of all the anguish of my soul
At thy offences, I'm thy mother still !
Against the solemn purpose I had form'd
Never to mix in this unhallow'd crowd,
The wondrous story of the mystic writing,
Of strange and awful import, brings me here ;
If haply I may show some likely means
To fathom this dark mystery.

BELSHAZZAR.

Speak, O queen !

My listening soul shall hang upon thy words,
And prompt obedience follow them !

NITOCRIS.

Then hear me.

Among the captive tribes which hither came
To grace Nebassar's triumph, there was brought
A youth nam'd Daniel, favour'd by high Heav'n
With pow'r to look into the secret page
Of dim Futurity's mysterious volume.
The spirit of the holy gods is in him ;
No vision so obscure, so deeply hid,
No sentence so perplex'd, but he can solve it :
He can unfold the dark decrees of Fate,
Can trace each crooked labyrinth of thought,
Each winding maze of doubt, and make it clear
And palpable to sense. He twice explain'd
The monarch's mystic dreams. The holy seer
Saw, with prophetic spirit, what befel
The king long after. For his wondrous skill
He was rewarded, honour'd, and caress'd,

And with the rulers of Chaldea rank'd :
Though now, alas ! thrown by, his services
Forgotten or neglected.

BELSHAZZAR.

Send with speed
A message, to command the holy man
To meet us on the instant.

NITOCRIS.

I already
Have sent to ask his presence at the palace ;
And, lo ! in happy season, see he comes.

Enter DANIEL.

BELSHAZZAR.

Welcome, thrice venerable sage ! approach.
Art thou that Daniel whom my great forefather
Brought hither with the captive tribes of Judah ?

DANIEL.

I am, O king !

BELSHAZZAR.

Then pardon, holy prophet ;
Nor let a just resentment of thy wrongs,
And long neglected merit, shut thy heart
Against a king's request, a suppliant king.

DANIEL.

The God I worship teaches to forgive.

BELSHAZZAR.

Then let thy words bring comfort to my soul,
I've heard the spirit of the gods is in thee ;

That thou canst look into the fates of men,
With prescience more than human!

DANIEL.

Hold, O king!
Wisdom is from above; 'tis God's own gift;
I of myself am nothing; but from him,
The little knowledge I possess, I hold:
To him be all the glory!

BELSHAZZAR.

Then, O Daniel!
If thou indeed dost boast that wondrous gift,
That faculty divine; look there, and tell me!
O say, what mean those mystic characters?
Remove this load of terror from my soul,
And honours, such as kings can give, await thee.
Thou shalt be great beyond thy soul's ambition,
And rich above thy wildest dream of wealth:
Clad in the scarlet robe our nobles wear,
And grac'd with princely ensigns, thou shalt stand
Near our own throne, and third within our empire.

DANIEL.

O mighty king, thy gifts with thee remain,
And let thy high rewards on others fall.
The princely ensign, nor the scarlet robe,
Nor yet to be the third within thy realm,
Can touch the soul of Daniel. Honour, fame,
All that the world calls great, thy crown itself,
Could never satisfy the vast ambition
Of an immortal spirit; I aspire
Beyond thy pow'r of giving; my high hopes

Reach also to a crown—but 'tis a crown
Unfading and eternal.

FIRST COURTIER.

Wondrous man!
Our priests teach no such notions.

DANIEL.

Yet, O king !
Though all unmov'd by grandeur or by gift,
I will unfold the high decrees of Heav'n,
And straight declare the mystery.

BELSHAZZAR.

Speak, O prophet!

DANIEL.

Prepare to hear what kings have seldom heard ;
Prepare to hear what courtiers seldom tell ;
Prepare to hear—the truth. The mighty God,
Who rules the sceptres and the hearts of kings,
Gave thy renown'd forefather* here to reign,
With such extent of empire, weight of pow'r,
And greatness of dominion, the wide earth
Trembled beneath the terror of his name,
And kingdoms stood or fell as he decreed.
Oh! dangerous pinnacle of pow'r supreme!
Who can stand safe upon its treach'rous top,
Behold the gazing prostrate world below,
Whom depth and distance into pigmies shrink,
And not grow giddy? Babylon's great king
Forgot he was a man, a helpless man,

* Nebuchadnezzar.

Subject to pain, and sin, and death, like others!
 But who shall fight against Omnipotence?
 Or, who hath harden'd his obdurate heart
 Against the Majesty of Heav'n, and prosper'd?
 The God he had insulted was aveng'd;
 From empire, from the joys of social life,
 He drove him forth; extinguish'd reason's lamp;
 Quench'd that bright spark of deity within;
 Compell'd him with the forest brutes to roam
 For scanty pasture; and the mountain dews
 Fell, cold and wet, on his defenceless head,
 Till he confess'd—Let men, let monarchs hear!
 Till he confess'd, PRIDE WAS NOT MADE FOR MAN!

NITOCRIS.

Oh, awful instance of divine displeasure!

BELSHAZZAR.

Proceed! my soul is rapt in fix'd attention!

DANIEL.

O king! thy grandsire not in vain had sinn'd,
 If, from his error, thou hadst learnt the truth.
 The story of his fall thou oft hast heard,
 But has it taught thee wisdom? Thou, like him,
 Hast been elate with pow'r and mad with pride.
 Like him, thou hast defy'd the living God.
 Nay, to bold thoughts hast added deeds more bold.
 Thou hast outwrought the pattern he bequeath'd
 thee,
 And quite outgone example; hast profan'd,
 With impious hand, the vessels of the temple:

Those vessels sanctified to holiest use,
Thou hast polluted with unhallow'd lips,
And made the instruments of foul debauch.
Thou hast ador'd the gods of wood and stone,
Vile, senseless deities, the work of hands,
But HE, THE KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF
LORDS,
In whom exists thy life, thy soul, thy breath,
On whom thy being hangs, thou hast deny'd.

FIRST COURTIER (*aside to the others*).

With what an holy boldness he reproves him!

SECOND COURTIER,

Such is the fearless confidence of virtue!
And such the righteous courage those maintain
Who plead the cause of truth! The smallest word
He utters had been death to half the court.

BELSHAZZAR.

Now let the mystic writing be explain'd,
Thrice venerable sage!

DANIEL.

O mighty king!

Hear then its awful import: *Heav'n has number'd
Thy days of royalty, and soon will end them.
Our God has weigh'd thee in the even balance
Of his own holy law, and finds thee wanting:
And last, thy kingdom shall be wrested from thee;
And know, the Mede and Persian shall possess it.*

BELSHAZZAR (*starts up*).

Prophet, when shall this be?

DANIEL.

In God's own time :
 Here my commission ends ; I may not utter
 More than thou'st heard ; but oh ! remember, king,
 Thy days are number'd : hear, repent, and live !

BELSHAZZAR.

Say, prophet, what can penitence avail,
 If Heav'n's decrees immutably are fix'd ?
 Can pray'rs avert our fate ?

DANIEL.

They change our hearts,
 And thus dispose Omnipotence to mercy.
 'Tis man that alters ; God is still the same.
Conditional are all Heav'n's covenants :
 And when the uplifted thunder is withheld,
 'Tis pray'r that deprecates the impending bolt.
 Good Hezekiah's * days were number'd too :
 But penitence and faith were mighty pleas :
 At Mercy's throne they never plead in vain.
[*He is going.*]

BELSHAZZAR.

Stay, prophet, and receive thy promis'd gift ;
 The scarlet robe and princely chain are thine ;
 And let my heralds publish through the land
 That Daniel stands, in dignity and pow'r,
 The third in Babylon. These just rewards
 Thou well may'st claim, though sad thy prophecy !

NITOCRIS.

Be not deceiv'd, my son ! nor let thy soul

* 2 Chron. xxxiii. Isaiah xxxviii.

Snatch an uncertain moment's treach'rous rest,
On the dread brink of that tremendous gulf
Which yawns beneath thee.

DANIEL.

O unhappy king!
Know what *must* happen once, *may* happen soon.
Remember that 'tis terrible to meet
Great evils unprepar'd! and, O Belshazzar!
In the wild moment of dismay and death,
Remember thou wast warn'd! and, oh remember,
Warnings despis'd are condemnations then!
[*Exeunt Daniel and Nitocris.*

BELSHAZZAR.

'Tis well—my soul shakes off its load of care:
'Tis only the obscure is terrible.
Imagination frames events unknown,
In wild fantastic shapes of hideous ruin;
And what it fears, creates!—I know the worst!
And awful is that worst as fear could feign:
But distant are the ills I have to dread!
What is remote may be uncertain too!
Ha! princes! hope breaks in!—This may not be.

FIRST COURTIER.

Perhaps this Daniel is in league with Persia;
And brib'd by Cyrus to report these horrors,
To weaken and impede the mighty plans
Of thy imperial mind!

BELSHAZZAR.

'Tis very like.

SECOND COURTIER.

Return we to the banquet?

BELSHAZZAR.

Dare we venture?

THIRD COURTIER.

Let not this dreaming seer disturb the king.
Against the power of Cyrus and the Mede,
Is Babylon secure. Her brazen gates
Mock all attempts to force them. Proud Euphrates,
A watery bulwark, guards our ample city
From all assailants. And within the walls
Of this stupendous capital are lodg'd
Such vast provisions, such exhaustless stores,
As a twice ten years' siege could never waste.

BELSHAZZAR (*embraces him*).

My better genius! Safe in such resources,
I mock the prophet.—Turn we to the banquet!

[*As they are going to resume their Places at the Banquet, a dreadful Uproar is heard, tumultuous Cries and warlike Sounds. All stand terrified. Enter Soldiers, with their Swords drawn, and wounded.*]

SOLDIER.

Oh, helpless Babylon! Oh, wretched king!
Chaldea is no more! the Mede has conquer'd!
The victor, Cyrus, like a mighty torrent,
Comes rushing on, and marks his way with ruin!
Destruction is at hand; escape, or perish

BELSHAZZAR.

Impossible! Villain and slave, thou ly'st!
Euphrates and the brazen gates secure us.
While those remain, Belshazzar laughs at danger!

SOLDIER.

Euphrates is diverted from its course!
The brazen gates are burst, the city's taken,
Thyself a pris'ner, and thy empire lost.

BELSHAZZAR.

Oh, prophet! I remember thee indeed!
[*He runs out. They follow in the utmost Confusion.*]

Enter several JEWS, MEDES, and BABYLONIANS.

FIRST JEW.

He comes, he comes! the long-predicted prince,
Cyrus! the destin'd instrument of Heav'n,
To free our captive nation, and restore
JEHOVAH's temple. Carnage marks his way,
And conquest sits upon his plume-crown'd helm!

SECOND JEW.

What noise is that?

FIRST JEW.

Hark! 'tis Belshazzar's voice!

BELSHAZZAR (*without*).

O soldier, spare my life, and aid my flight!
Such treasures shall reward the gentle deed
As Persia never saw. I'll be thy slave;

I'll yield my crown to Cyrus ; I'll adore
His gods and thine ; I'll kneel, and kiss thy feet,
And worship thee.—It is not much I ask—
I'll live in bondage, beggary, and pain,
So thou but let me live.

SOLDIER.

Die, tyrant, die!

BELSHAZZAR.

O Daniel! Daniel! Daniel!

Enter SOLDIER.

SOLDIER.

Belshazzar's dead !
The wretched king breath'd out his furious soul
In that tremendous groan.

FIRST JEW.

Belshazzar's dead !
Then, Judah, thou art free! The tyrant's fall'n!
Jerusalem, Jerusalem is free!

PART III.

Enter DANIEL and JEWS.

DANIEL.

BEL boweth down*, and haughty Nebo stoops!
The idols fall; the god and worshipper
Together fall; together they bow down!
Each other, or themselves they cannot save.
O Babylon, where is thy refuge now?
Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, meant to save,
Pervert thee! and thy blessing is thy bane!
Where are thy brutish deities, Chaldea?
Where are thy gods of gold?—O Lord of life!
Thou very God! so fall thy foes before thee!

FIRST JEW.

So fell beneath the terrors of thy name
The idol Chemosh, Moab's empty trust;
So Ammonitish Moloch sunk before thee;
So fell Philistine Dagon: so shall fall,
To time's remotest period, all thy foes,
Triumphant Lord of Hosts!

DANIEL.

How chang'd our fate!
Not for myself, O Judah! but for thee,
I shed these tears of joy. For I no more

* Isaiah xlvii.

Must view the cedars which adorn the brow
Of Syrian Lebanon ; no more shall see
Thy pleasant stream, O Jordan ; nor the flocks
Which whiten all the mountains of Judea ;
No more these eyes delighted shall review
Or Carmel's heights, or Sharon's flow'ry vales.
I must remain in Babylon ! So Heav'n,
To whose awards I bow me, has decreed.
I ne'er shall see thee, Salem ! I am old ;
And few and toilsome are my days to come.
But we shall meet in those celestial climes,
Compar'd with which created glories sink ;
Where sinners shall have pow'r to harm no more,
And martyr'd Virtue rests her weary head.
Though ere my day of promis'd grace shall come,
I shall be tried by perils strange and new ;
Nor shall I taste of death, so have I learn'd,
Till I have seen the captive tribes restor'd.

FIRST JEW.

And shall we view, once more, thy hallow'd
towers,
Imperial Salem ?

DANIEL.

Yes, my youthful friends !
You shall behold the second temple rise*,
With grateful ecstasy ; but we, your sires,
Now bent with hoary age ; we, whose charm'd eyes
Beheld the matchless glories of the first,
Should weep, rememb'ring what we once had seen,
That model of perfection !

* Ezai.

SECOND JEW.

Never more
Shall such a wond'rous structure grace the earth!

DANIEL.

Well have you borne affliction, men of Judah!
Well have sustain'd your portion of distress:
And, unrepining, drank the bitter dregs
Of adverse fortune! Happier days await you.
Oh, guard against the perils of success!
Prosperity dissolves the yielding soul,
And the bright sun of shining fortune melts
The firmest virtue down. Beware, my friends,
Be greatly cautious of prosperity!
Defend your sliding hearts; and, trembling, think
How those, who buffeted affliction's waves
With vig'rous virtue, sunk in pleasure's calm.
HE*, who of special grace had been allow'd
To rear the hallow'd fane to Israel's God,
By wealth corrupted, and by ease debauch'd,
Forsook the God to whom he rais'd the fane;
And, sunk in sensual sloth, consum'd his days
In vile idolatrous rites!—Nor think, my sons,
That virtue in sequester'd *solitude*
Is always found. Within the inmost soul
The hidden tempter lurks; nor less betrays
In the still seeming safety of retreat
Than where the world her snares entangling spreads,
More visible to sense. Guard every thought:
Who thinks himself secure is half undone;

* Solomon.

For sin, unwatch'd, may reach the sanctuary :
'Tis not the place preserves us. Righteous Lot
Stemm'd the strong current of Corruption's tide,
E'en in polluted Sodom ; safe he liv'd,
While circumspective Virtue's watchful eye
Was anxiously awake ; but in the shade,
Far from the obvious perils which alarm
With palpable temptation, secret sin
Ensnar'd his soul ; he trusted in himself !
Security betray'd him, and he fell.

SECOND JEW.

Thy prudent counsels in our hearts shall live,
As if a pen of adamant had grav'd them.

FIRST JEW.

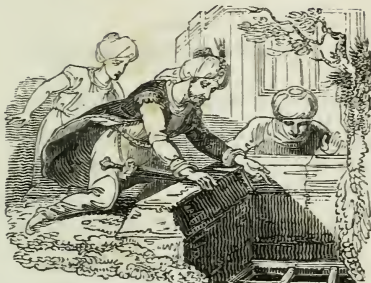
The dawn approaches ; let us part, my friend,
Secure of peace, since tyranny is fall'n.

DANIEL.

So perish all thine enemies, O Lord !
So, mighty God ! shall perish all who seek
Corrupted pleasures in the turbid waves
Of life's polluted stream, and madly quit
The living fountain of perennial grace !

DANIEL.

A Sacred Drama.



The Righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the
Wicked cometh in his stead.

PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

On peut de plus grands rois surprendre la justice
Incapable de tromper,
Ils ont peine a s'échapper
Des pieges de l'artifice.
Un cœur noble ne peut soupçonner en autrui
La bassesse et la malice
Qu'il ne sent point en lui.

ESTHER. TRAGÉDIE DE RACINE.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

DARIUS, *King of Media and Babylon.*

PHARNACES, }
SORANUS, } *Courtiers, Enemies to DANIEL.*

ARASPE, *a young Median Lord, Friend and Convert to DANIEL.*

DANIEL.

SCENE—*The City of BABYLON.*

The Subject is taken from the Sixth Chapter of the Prophet Daniel.

DANIEL.

PART I.

PHARNACES, SORANUS.

PHARNACES.

YES!—I have noted with a jealous eye,
The pow'r of this new fav'rite! Daniel reigns,
And not Darius! Daniel guides the springs
Which move this mighty empire! High he sits,
Supreme in favour both with prince and people!
Where is the spirit of our Median lords,
Tamely to crouch and bend the supple knee
To this new god? By Mithras, 'tis too much!
Shall great Arbaces' race to Daniel bow?
A foreigner, a captive, and a Jew?
Something must be devis'd, and that right soon,
To shake his credit.

SORANUS.

Rather hope to shake
The mountain pine, whose twisting fibres clasp
The earth, deep-rooted! rather hope to shake
The Scythian Taurus from his central base!
No—Daniel sits too absolute in pow'r,

Too firm in favour, for the keenest shaft
Of nicely-aiming jealousy to reach him.

PHARNACES.

Rather he sits too high to sit securely.
Yes! he has reach'd that pinnacle of pow'r,
Which closely touches on depression's verge.
Hast thou then liv'd in courts? hast thou grown grey
Beneath the mask a subtle statesman wears
To hide his secret soul, and dost not know
That of all fickle Fortune's transient gifts,
Favour is most deceitful? 'Tis a beam,
Which darts uncertain brightness for a moment!
The faint, precarious, sickly shine of pow'r;
Giv'n without merit, by caprice withdrawn.
No trifle is so small as what obtains,
Save that which loses favour; 'tis a breath,
Which hangs upon a smile! A look, a word,
A frown, the air-built tower of fortune shakes,
And down the unsubstantial fabric falls!
Darius, just and clement as he is,
If I mistake not, may be wrought upon
By prudent wiles, by Flattery's pleasant cup,
Administer'd with caution.

SORANUS.

But the means?
For Daniel's life (a foe must grant him that)
Is so replete with goodness, so adorn'd
With ev'ry virtue, so exactly squar'd
By Wisdom's nicest rules, 'twill be most hard
To charge him with the shadow of offence.
Pure is his fame as Scythia's mountain snows,

When not a breath pollutes them ! O Pharnaces,
I've scann'd the actions of his daily life
With all the industrious malice of a foe ;
And nothing meets mine eye but deeds of honour !
In office pure ; for equitable acts
Renown'd : in justice and impartial truth,
The Grecian Themis is not more severe.

PHARNACES.

By yon bright sun thou blazon'st forth his praise,
As if with rapture thou didst read the page
Where these fair deeds are written !

SORANUS.

Thou mistak'st.

I only meant to show what cause we have
To hate and fear him. I but meant to paint
His popular virtues and eclipsing merit.
Then for devotion, and religious zeal,
Who so renown'd as Daniel ? Of his law
Observant in the extreme. Thrice every day,
With prostrate rev'rence, he adores his God :
With superstitious awe his face he turns
Towards his belov'd Jerusalem, as if
Some local, partial god, might there be found
To hear his supplication. No affair
Of state, no business so importunate,
No pleasure so alluring, no employ
Of such high import, to seduce his zeal
From this observance due !

PHARNACES.

There, there he falls !
Enough, my friend ! his piety destroys him.

There, at the very footstool of his God,
Where he implores protection, there I'll crush him.

SORANUS.

What means Pharnaces?

PHARNACES.

Ask not what I mean.

The new idea floating in my brain
Has yet receiv'd no form. 'Tis yet too soon
To give it body, circumstance, or breath.
The seeds of mighty deeds are lab'ring here,
And struggling for a birth! 'Tis near the hour
The king is wont to summon us to council:
Ere that, this big conception of my mind
I'll shape to form and being. Thou, meanwhile
Convene our chosen friends; for I shall need
The aid of all your counsels, and the weight
Of grave authority.

SORANUS.

Who shall be trusted?

PHARNACES.

With our immediate motive none, except
A chosen band of friends, who most repine
At Daniel's exaltation. But the scheme
I meditate must be disclos'd to all
Who bear high office; All our Median rulers,
Princes and captains, presidents and lords;
All must assemble. 'Tis a common cause:
All but the young Araspes; he inclines
To Daniel and his God. He sits attent,

With ravish'd ears, to listen to his lore :
With rev'rence names Jerusalem, and reads
The volume of the law. No more he bows
To hail the golden Ruler of the Day,
But looks for some great Prophet, greater far
So they pretend, than Mithras!—From him, there-
fore,
Conceal whate'er of injury is devis'd
'Gainst Daniel. Be it too thy care to-day,
To keep him from the council.

SORANUS.

'Tis well thought.

'Tis now about the hour of Daniel's prayer :
Araspes too is with him ; and to-day
They will not sit in council. Haste we then !
Designs of high importance, once conceiv'd,
Should be accomplish'd. Genius which discerns,
And courage which achieves, despise the aid
Of ling'ring circumspection. The keen spirit
Seizes the prompt occasion, makes the thought
Start into instant action, and at once
Plans and performs, resolves and executes !

PART II.

SCENE—DANIEL's House.

DANIEL, ARASPES.

ARASPES.

PROCEED, proceed, thrice venerable sage!
Enlighten my dark mind with this new ray,
This dawning of salvation! Tell me more
Of this expected King! this Comforter!
This Promise of the nations! this great Hope
Of anxious Israel! This unborn Prophet!
This Wonderful, this mighty Counsellor!
This everlasting Lord! This Prince of Peace!
This Balm of Gilead, which shall heal the wounds
Of universal nature! This MESSIAH!
Redeemer, Saviour, Sufferer, Victim, God!

DANIEL.

Enough to animate our faith, we know,
But not enough to sooth the curious pride
Of vain philosophy! Enough to cheer
Our path we see, the rest is hid in clouds,
And Heav'n's own shadows rest upon the view!

ARASPES.

Go on, blest sage! I could for ever hear,
Untir'd, thy admonition! Tell me how
I shall obtain the favour of that God
I but begin to know, but fain would serve.

DANIEL.

By deep humility, by faith unfeign'd,
By holy deeds, best proof of living faith!
O Faith*, thou wonder-working principle,
Eternal substance of our present hope,
Thou evidence of things invisible!
What cannot man sustain, sustain'd by thee!
The time would fail, and the bright star of day
Would quench his beams in ocean, and resign
His empire to the silver queen of night;
And she again descend the steep of heav'n,
If I should tell what wonders Faith achiev'd
By Gideon, Barak, and the holy seer,
Elkanah's son; the pious Gileadite,
Ill-fated Jephthah? He of Zorah too†!
In strength unequall'd; and the shepherd-king,
Who vanquish'd Gath's fell giant! Need I tell
Of holy prophets, who, by conqu'ring Faith,
Wrought deeds incredible to mortal sense;
Vanquish'd contending kingdoms, quell'd the rage
Of furious pestilence, extinguish'd fire!
Victorious Faith! others by thee endur'd
Exile, disgrace, captivity, and death!
Some, uncomplaining, bore (nor be it deem'd
The meanest exercise of well-tried Faith)
The cruel mocking, and the bitter taunt,
Foul obloquy, and undeserv'd reproach;
Despising shame, that death to human pride!

ARASPES.

How shall this faith be sought?

* Hebrews xi.

† Sampson.

DANIEL.

By earnest pray'r,

Solicit first the wisdom from above:

Wisdom, whose fruits are purity and peace!

Wisdom! that bright intelligence, which sat

Supreme, when with his golden compasses *

The Eternal plann'd the fabric of the world,

Produc'd his fair idea into light,

And said that all was good! Wisdom, blest beam!

The brightness of the everlasting light!

The spotless mirror of the power of God!

The reflex image of the all-perfect Mind!

A stream translucent, flowing from the source

Of glory infinite! a cloudless light,

Defilement cannot touch, nor sin pollute

Her unstain'd purity! Not Ophir's gold,

Nor Ethiopia's gems can match her price!

The ruby of the mine is pale before her!

And, like the oil Elisha's bounty bless'd,

She is a treasure which doth grow by use,

And multiply by spending! She contains,

Within herself, the sum of excellence.

If riches are desir'd, Wisdom is wealth!

If prudence, where shall keen invention find

Artificer more cunning? If renown,

In her right hand it comes! If piety,

Are not her labours virtues? If the lore

Which sage experience teaches, lo! she scans

Antiquity's dark truths; the past she knows,

Anticipates the future; not by arts

* See Paradise Lost, book vii. line 225. Proverbs viii. 27.

Forbidden, of Chaldean sorcerer,
But from the piercing ken of deep foreknowledge,
From her sure science of the human heart
She weighs effects with causes, ends with means;
Resolving all into the sovereign will.
For earthly blessings moderate be thy pray'r,
And qualified; for light, for strength, for grace,
Unbounded thy petition.

ARASPES.

Now, O prophet!

Explain the secret doubts which rack my mind,
And my weak sense confound. Give me some line,
To sound the depths of Providence! Oh say,
Why the ungodly prosper? why their root
Shoots deep, and their thick branches flourish fair,
Like the green bay tree? why the righteous man,
Like tender plants to shiv'ring winds expos'd,
Is stripp'd and torn, in naked virtue bare,
And nipp'd by cruel Sorrow's biting blast?
Explain, O Daniel, these mysterious ways
To my faint apprehension! For as yet
I've much to learn. Fair Truth's immortal sun
Is sometimes hid in clouds; not that her light
Is in itself defective; but obscur'd
By my weak prejudice, imperfect Faith,
And all the thousand causes which obstruct
The growth of goodness.

DANIEL.

Follow me, Araspes.

Within thou shalt peruse the sacred page,
The book of life eternal! *that* will show thee

The END of the ungodly! thou wilt own
How short their longest period; will perceive
How black a night succeeds their brightest day!
Thy purged eye will see God is not slack,
As men count slackness, to fulfil his word.
Weigh well this book; and may the Spirit of grace,
Who stamp'd the seal of truth on the bless'd page,
Descend into thy soul, remove thy doubts,
Clear the perplex'd, and solve the intricate,
Till faith be lost in sight, and hope in joy.

PART III.

DARIUS *on his Throne.*—PHARNACES, SORANUS,
Princes, Presidents, and Courtiers.

PHARNACES.

HAIL, king Darius! live for ever!

DARIUS.

Welcome!

Welcome, my princes, presidents, and friends!
Now tell me, has your wisdom aught devis'd
To aid the commonwealth? In our new empire,
Subdued Chaldea, is there aught remains
Your prudence can suggest to serve the state,
To benefit the subject, to redress
And raise the injur'd, to assist the oppress'd,
And humble the oppressor? If you know,

Speak freely, princes! Why am I a king,
Except to poise the awful scale of justice
With even hand; to minister to want;
To bless the nations with a lib'ral rule,
Vicegerent of the eternal Oromasdes?

PHARNACES.

So absolute thy wisdom, mighty king,
All counsel were superfluous.

DARIUS.

Hold, Pharnaces!
No adulation; 'tis the death of virtue!
Who flatters is of all mankind the lowest,
Save he who courts the flattery. Kings are men,
As feeble and as frail as those they rule,
And born, like them, to die. The Lydian monarch,
Unhappy Cræsus, lately sat aloft,
Almost above mortality; now see him!
Sunk to the vile condition of a slave,
He swells the train of Cyrus! I, like him,
To misery am obnoxious. See this throne;
This royal throne the great Nebassar fill'd;
Yet hence his pride expell'd him! Yonder wall,
The dread terrific writing to the eyes
Of proud Belshazzar show'd; sad monuments
Of Heav'n's tremendous vengeance! and shall I,
Unwarn'd by such examples, cherish pride?
Yet to their dire calamities I owe
The brightest gem that glistens in my crown,
Sage Daniel. If my speech have aught of worth,
Or if my life with aught of good be grac'd,
To him alone I owe it.

SORANUS (*aside to PHARNACES*).

Now, Pharnaces,
Will he run o'er, and dwell upon his praise,
As if we ne'er had heard it; nay will swell
The nauseous catalogue with many a virtue
His own fond fancy coins.

PHARNACES.

O, great Darius!
Let thine unworthy servant's words find grace,
And meet acceptance in his royal ear,
Who subjugates the east! Let not the king
With anger hear my pray'r.

DARIUS.

Pharnaces, speak;
I know thou lov'st me; I but meant to chide
Thy flattery, not reprove thee for thy zeal.
Speak boldly, friends, as man should speak to man.
Perish the barb'rous maxims of the east;
Which basely would enslave the free-born mind,
And plunder man of the best gift of Heav'n,
His liberty of soul.

PHARNACES.

Darius! hear me.
Thy princes, and the captains of thy bands,
Thy presidents, the nobles who bear rule
O'er provinces, and I, thine humble creature,
Less than the least in merit, but in love,
In zeal, and duty, equal with the first,
We have devis'd a measure to confirm
Thy infant empire, to establish firmly

Thy pow'r and new dominion, and secure
Thy growing greatness past the pow'r of change.

DARIUS.

I am prepar'd to hear thee. Speak, Pharnaces.

PHARNACES.

The wretched Babylonians long have groan'd
Beneath the rule of princes, weak or rash.
The rod of pow'r was sway'd alike amiss,
By feeble Merodach, and fierce Belshazzar.
One let the slacken'd reins too loosely float
Upon the people's neck, and lost his pow'r
By nerveless relaxation. He, who follow'd,
Held with a tyrant's hand the cruel curb,
And check'd the groaning nation till it bled;
On different rocks they met one common ruin.
Their edicts were irresolute, their laws
Were feebly plann'd, their councils ill-advis'd;
Now so relax'd, and now so overstrain'd,
That the tir'd people, wearied with the weight
They long have borne, will soon disdain control,
Tread on all rule, and spurn the hand that guides
them.

DARIUS.

But say what remedy?

PHARNACES.

That too, O king,
Thy servants have provided. Hitherto
They bear the yoke submissive. But to fix
Thy pow'r and their obedience, to reduce
All hearts to thy dominion, yet avoid

Those deeds of cruelty thy nature starts at,
Thou shouldst begin by some imperial act
Of absolute dominion, yet unstain'd
By aught of barbarous. For know, O king!
Wholesome severity, if wisely fram'd
With sober discipline, procures more reverence
Than all the lenient counsels and weak measures
Of frail irresolution.

DARIUS.

Now proceed
To thy request.

PHARNACES.

Not I, but all request it.
Be thy imperial edict issued straight,
And let a firm decree be this day pass'd,
Irrevocable, as our Median laws.
Ordain that for the space of thirty days,
No subject in thy realm shall aught request
Of God or man, except of thee, O king!

DARIUS.

Wherefore this strange decree?

PHARNACES.

'Twill fix the crown
With lasting safety on thy royal brow,
And, by a bloodless means, preserve the obedience
Of this new empire. Think how much 'twill raise
Thy high renown! 'Twill make thy name rever'd,
And popular beyond example. What!
To be as Heav'n, dispensing good and ill
For thirty days! With thine own ears to hear

Thy people's wants! with thine own lib'ral hands
To bless thy suppliant subjects! O Darius!
Thou'lt seem as bounteous as a giving god!
And reign in every heart in Babylon
As well as Media! What a glorious state
To be the sovereign arbiter of good!
The first efficient cause of happiness!
To scatter mercies with a plenteous hand,
And to be blest thyself in blessing others!

DARIUS.

Is this the gen'ral wish?

[Princes and Courtiers kneel.]

CHIEF PRESIDENT.

Of one, of all.

Behold thy princes, presidents, and lords,
Thy counsellors, and captains! See, O king!

[Presenting the Edict.]

Behold the instrument our zeal has drawn:
The edict is prepar'd. We only wait
The confirmation of thy gracious word,
And thy imperial signet.

DARIUS.

Say, Pharnaces,
What penalty awaits the man who dares
Transgress our mandate?

PHARNACES.

Instant death, O king!
This statute says, "Should any subject dare
Petition, for the space of thirty days,
Of God or man, except of thee, O king!"

He shall be thrown into yon dreadful den
Of hungry lions!"

DARIUS.

Hold! Methinks a deed
Of such importance should be wisely weigh'd.

PHARNACES.

We have revolv'd it, mighty king! with care,
With closest scrutiny. On us devolve
Whatever blame occurs!

DARIUS.

I am satisfy'd.
Then to your wisdom I commit me, princes.
Behold the royal signet: see, 'tis done.

PHARNACES (*aside.*)

There Daniel fell! That signet seal'd his doom.

DARIUS (*after a Pause*).

Let me reflect—Sure I have been too rash!
Why such intemp'rate haste? But you are wise;
And would not counsel this severe decree
But for the wisest purpose. Yet, methinks,
I might have weigh'd, and in my mind revolv'd—
This statute, ere the royal signet stamp'd,
It had been past repeal. Sage Daniel too!
My counsellor, my guide, my well-try'd friend,
He should have been consulted; he whose wisdom
I still have found oracular.

PHARNACES.

Mighty king!
'Tis as it should be. The decree is past

Irrevocable, as the stedfast law
Of Mede and Persian, which can never change.
Those who observe it live, as is most meet,
High in thy grace ;—who violate it, die.

PART IV.

SCENE—DANIEL'S House.

DANIEL, ARASPES.

ARASPES.

O H, holy Daniel ! prophet, father, friend,
I come the wretched messenger of ill !
Thy foes complot thy death. For what can mean
This new-made law, extorted from the king
Almost by force ? What can it mean, O Daniel,
But to involve thee in the toils they spread
To snare thy precious life ?

DANIEL.

How ! was the king
Consenting to this edict ?

ARASPES.

They surpris'd
His easy nature ; took him when his heart
Was soften'd by their blandishments. They wore
The mask of public virtue to deceive him.
Beneath the specious name of general good,

They wrought him to their purposes : no time
 Allow'd him to delib'rate. One short hour,
 Another moment, and his soul had gain'd
 Her natural tone of virtue.

DANIEL.

That great Pow'r
 Who suffers evil only to produce
 Some unseen good, permits that this should be :
 And, HE permitting, I well pleas'd resign.
 Retire, my friend : this is my second hour
 Of daily pray'r. Anon we'll meet again.
 Here, in the open face of that bright sun
 Thy fathers worshipp'd, will I offer up,
 As is my rule, petition to our God,
 For thee, for me, for Solyma, for all!

ARASPES.

Oh, stay! what mean'st thou? sure thou hast not
 heard
 The edict of the king? I thought, but now,
 Thou knew'st its purport. It expressly says,
 That no petition henceforth shall be made,
 For thirty days, save only to the king;
 Nor pray'r nor intercession shall be heard
 Of any god or man, but of Darius.

DANIEL.

And think'st thou then my rev'rence for the king,
 Good as he is, shall tempt me to renounce
 My sworn allegiance to the King of kings?
 Hast thou commanded legions! strove in battle,
 Defy'd the face of danger, mock'd at death

In all its frightful forms, and tremblest now?
Come, learn of me; I'll teach thee to be bold,
Though sword I never drew! Fear not, Araspes,
The feeble vengeance of a mortal man,
Whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein
Is he to be accounted of? but fear
The awaken'd vengeance of the living Lord;
He who can plunge the everlasting soul
In infinite perdition!

ARASPES.

Then, O Daniel!

If thou persist to disobey the edict,
Retire and hide thee from the prying eyes
Of busy malice!

DANIEL.

He who is asham'd

To vindicate the honour of his God,
Of him the living Lord shall be asham'd,
When he shall judge the tribes!

ARASPES.

Yet, oh remember,

Oft have I heard thee say, the secret heart
Is fair Devotion's temple; there the saint,
E'en on that living altar, lights the flame
Of purest sacrifice, which burns unseen,
Not unaccepted.—I remember too,
When Syrian Naaman*, by Elisha's hand,
Was cleans'd from foul pollution, and his mind
Enlighten'd by the miracle, confess'd

* 2 Kings v.

The Almighty God of Jacob; that he deem'd it
No flagrant violation of his faith
To bend at Rimmon's shrine; nor did the Secr
Forbid the rite external.

DANIEL.

Know, Araspes,
Heav'n deigns to suit our trials to our strength,
A recent convert, feeble in his faith,
Naaman, perhaps, had sunk beneath the weight
Of so severe a duty. Gracious Heaven
Forbears to bruise the reed, or quench the flax
When feeble and expiring. But shall I,
Shall Daniel, shall the servant of the Lord,
A vet'ran in his cause—long train'd to know
And do his will—long exercis'd in woe,
Bred in captivity, and born to suffer;
Shall I from known, from certain duty shrink,
To shun a threaten'd danger? O Araspes!
Shall I, advanc'd in age, in zeal decline?
Grow careless as I reach my journey's end?
And slacken in my pace, the goal in view?
Perish discretion, when it interferes
With duty! Perish the false policy
Of human wit, which would commute our safety
With God's eternal honour! Shall his law
Be set at nought, that I may live at ease?
How would the heathen triumph, should I fall
Through coward fear? How would God's enemies
Insultingly blaspheme?

ARASPE8.

Yet think a moment.

DANIEL.

No!—

Where evil may be *done*, 'tis right to ponder ;
Where only *suffer'd*, know, the shortest pause
Is much too long. Had great Darius paus'd,
This ill had been prevented. But for me,
Araspes, to deliberate is to sin.

ARASPES.

Think of thy pow'r, thy favour with Darius :
Think of thy life's importance to the tribes,
Scarce yet return'd in safety. Live ! oh live !
To serve the cause of God !

DANIEL.

God will himself
Sustain his righteous cause. He knows to raise
Fit instruments to serve him. Know, Araspes,
He does not need our crimes to help his cause ;
Nor does his equitable law permit
A sinful act, from the prepost'rous plea
That good may follow it. For me, my friend,
The spacious earth holds not a bait to tempt me.
What would it profit me, if I should gain -
Imperial Ecbatan, the extended land
Of fruitful Media, nay, the world's wide empire,
If mine eternal soul must be the price ?
Farewell, my friend ! time presses. I have stol'n
Some moments from my duty, to confirm
And strengthen thy young faith ! Let us fulfil
What Heav'n enjoins—and leave to Heav'n the
event !

PART V.

SCENE—The Palace.

PHARNACES, SORANUS.

PHARNACES.

'Tis done—success has crown'd our scheme, Soranus ;
And Daniel falls into the deep-laid toils
Our prudence spread.

SORANUS.

That he should fall so soon,
Astonishes e'en me ! What ! not a day ?
What ! not a single moment to defer
His rash devotions ? Madly thus to rush
On certain peril, quite transcends belief !
When happen'd it, Pharnaces ?

PHARNACES.

On the instant :
Scarce is the deed accomplish'd. As he made
His ostentatious pray'r, e'en in the face
Of the bright God of day, all Babylon
Beheld the insult offer'd to Darius.
For, as in bold defiance of the law,
His windows were not clos'd. Our chosen bands,
Whom we had plac'd to note him, straight rush'd in,
And seiz'd him in the warmth of his blind zeal,

Ere half his prayer was finish'd. Young Araspes,
With all the wild extravagance of grief,
Prays, weeps, and threatens. Daniel silent stands,
With patient resignation, and prepares
To follow them.—But see, the king approaches !

SORANUS.

How's this ? deep sorrow sits upon his brow !
And stern resentment fires his angry eye.

Enter DARIUS.

DARIUS.

O deep-laid stratagem ! O artful wile !
To take me unprepar'd, to wound my heart,
E'en where it feels most tenderly, in friendship !
To stab my fame ! to hold me up a mark
To future ages, for the perjur'd prince
Who slew the friend he lov'd ! O Daniel, Daniel !
Who now shall trust Darius ? Not a slave
In my wide empire, from the Indian main
To the cold Caspian, but is more at ease
Than I, his monarch ! Yes ! I've done a deed
Will blot my honour with eternal stain !
Pharnaces ! oh thou hoary sycophant !
Thou wily politician ! thou hast snar'd
Thy unsuspecting master !

PHARNACES.

Great Darius,
Let not resentment blind thy royal eyes.
In what am I to blame ? Who could suspect
This obstinate resistance to the law ?

Who could foresee that Daniel would perforce
Oppose the king's decree?

DARIUS.

Thou, thou foresaw'st it!

Thou knew'st his righteous soul would ne'er endure
So long an interval of pray'r. But I,
Deluded king! 'twas I should have foreseen
His stedfast piety. I should have thought
Your earnest warmth had some more secret source,
Something that touch'd you nearer than your love,
Your well-feign'd zeal for me.—I should have
known,

When selfish politicians, hackney'd long
In fraud and artifice, affect a glow
Of patriot fervour, or fond loyalty,
Which scorns all show of interest, that's the moment
To watch their crooked projects. Well thou know'st
How dear I held him; how I priz'd his truth!
Did I not choose him from a subject world,
Unbless'd by fortune, and by birth ungrac'd,
A captive, and a Jew? Did I not love him?
Was he not rich in independent worth?
And great in native goodness? That undid him!
There, there he fell! If he had been less great,
He had been safe. Thou couldst not bear his
brightness;

The lustre of his virtues quite obscur'd,
And dimm'd thy fainter merit. Rash old man!
Go, and devise some means to set me free
From this dread load of guilt! Go, set at work
Thy plotting genius to redeem the life
Of venerable Daniel!

PHARNACES.

'Tis too late.

He has offended 'gainst the new decree ;
Has dar'd to make petition to his God,
Although the dreadful sentence of the act
Full well he knew. And by the establish'd law
Of Media, by that law irrevocable,
Which he has dar'd to violate, he dies!

DARIUS.

Impiety! presumption! monstrous law!
Irrevocable! Is there aught on earth
Deserves that name? The eternal laws alone
Of Oromasdes are unchangeable!
All human projects are so faintly fram'd,
So feebly plann'd, so liable to change,
So mix'd with error in their very form,
That mutable and mortal are the same.
But where is Daniel? Wherefore comes he not
To load me with reproaches? To upbraid me
With all the wrongs my barb'rous haste has done him?
Where is he?

PHARNACES.

He prepares to meet his fate.
This hour he dies, for so the act decrees.

DARIUS.

Suspend the bloody sentence. Bring him hither;
Or rather let me seek him, and implore
His dying pardon, and his parting prayer.

PART VI.

SCENE—DANIEL's House.

DANIEL, ARASPES.

ARASPES.

STILL let me follow thee; still let me hear
The voice of Wisdom, ere the silver cord
By Death's cold hand be loosen'd.

DANIEL.

Now I'm ready!
No grief, no woman's weakness, good Araspes!
Thou should'st rejoice my pilgrimage is o'er,
And the blest haven of repose in view.

ARASPES.

And must I lose thee, Daniel? must thou die?

DANIEL.

And what is death, my friend, that I should
fear it?

To die! why 'tis to triumph: 'tis to join
The great assembly of the good and just;
Immortal worthies, heroes, prophets, saints!
Oh! 'tis to join the band of holy men,
Made perfect by their sufferings! 'Tis to meet
My great progenitors! 'Tis to behold
The illustrious patriarchs; they with whom the Lord
Deign'd hold familiar converse! 'Tis to see

Bless'd Noah and his children, once a world!
'Tis to behold, oh! rapture to conceive!
Those we have known, and lov'd, and lost below!
Bold Azariah, and the band of brothers,
Who sought, in bloom of youth, the scorching flames!
Nor shall we see heroic men alone,
Champions who fought the fight of faith on earth;
But heav'nly conquerors, angelic hosts,
Michael and his bright legions who subdu'd
The foes of Truth! To join their blest employ
Of love and praise! to the high melodies
Of choirs celestial to attune my voice,
Accordant to the golden harps of saints!
To join in blest hosannahs to their King!
Whose face to see, whose glory to behold,
Alone were heav'n, though saint or seraph none
Should meet our sight, and only God were there!
This is to die! Who would not die for this?
Who would not die, that he might live for ever?

DARIUS, DANIEL, ARASPES.

DARIUS.

Where is he? where is Daniel? Let me see him!
Let me embrace that venerable form,
Which I have doom'd to glut the greedy maw
Of furious lions!

DANIEL.

King Darius, hail!

DARIUS.

Oh, injur'd Daniel! can I see thee thus,
Thus uncomplaining? can I bear to hear

That when the ruffian ministers of death
Stopp'd thy unfinish'd prayer, thy pious lips
Had just invok'd a blessing on Darius,
On him who sought thy life? Thy murd'ers dropt
Tears of strange pity. Look not on me thus
With mild benignity! Oh! I could bear
The voice of keen reproach, or the strong flash
Of fierce resentment; but I cannot stand
That touching silence, nor that patient eye
Of meek respect.

DANIEL.

Thou art my master still.

DARIUS.

I am thy murderer! I have sign'd thy death!

DANIEL.

I know thy bent of soul is honourable:
Thou hast been gracious still! Were it not so,
I would have met the appointment of high Heav'n
With humble acquiescence; but to know
Thy will concurr'd not with thy servant's fate,
Adds joy to resignation.

DARIUS.

Here I swear,
By him who sits enthron'd in yon bright sun,
Thy blood shall be aton'd! On these thy foes
Thou shalt have ample vengeance.

DANIEL.

Hold, O king!
Vengeance is mine, the eternal Lord has said:

Myself will recompense, with even hand,
The sinner for the sin. The wrath of man
Works not the righteousness of God.

DARIUS.

I had hop'd
We should have trod this busy stage together
A little longer, then have sunk to rest
In honourable age! Who now shall guide
My shatter'd bark in safety? Who shall now
Direct me? Oh, unhappy state of kings!
'Tis well the robe of majesty is gay,
Or who would put it on? A crown! what is it?
It is to bear the miseries of a people!
To hear their murmurs, feel their discontents,
And sink beneath a load of splendid care!
To have your best success ascrib'd to Fortune,
And Fortune's failures all ascrib'd to you!
It is to sit upon a joyless height,
To every blast of changing fate expos'd!
Too high for hope! too great for happiness!
For friendship too much fear'd! To all the joys
Of social freedom, and the endearing charm
Of lib'ral interchange of soul unknown!
Fate meant me an exception to the rest,
And, though a monarch, bless'd me with a friend;
And I—have murder'd him!

DANIEL.

My hour approaches.
Hate not my mem'ry, king: protect Araspes:
Encourage Cyrus in the holy work
Of building ruin'd Solyma. Farewell!

Sackbut or flute, or psaltery, shall charm
My ear, now dead to every note of joy!

ARASPES.

My grief can know no period!

DARIUS.

See that den!

There Daniel met the furious lions' rage!
There were the patient martyr's mangled limbs
Torn piece-meal! Never hide thy tears, Araspes!
'Tis virtuous sorrow, unallay'd, like mine,
By guilt and fell remorse! Let us approach:
Who knows but that dread Pow'r to whom he pray'd
So often and so fervently, has heard him!

[*He goes to the Mouth of the Den.*]

O Daniel! servant of the living God!
He whom thou hast serv'd so long, and lov'd so well,
From the devouring lions' famish'd jaw
Can he deliver thee?

DANIEL (*from the Bottom of the Den.*)

He can—he has!

DARIUS.

Methought I heard him speak!

ARASPES.

Oh! wondrous force
Of strong imagination! were thy voice
Loud as the trumpet's blast, it could not wake him
From that eternal sleep!

DANIEL (*in the Den*).

Hail! king Darius!

The God I serve has shut the lions' mouth,
To vindicate my innocence.

DARIUS.

He speaks!

He lives!

ARASPES.

'Tis no illusion: 'tis the sound
Of his known voice.

DARIUS.

Where are my servants? Haste,
Fly, swift as lightning, free him from the den;
Release him, bring him hither! Break the seal
Which keeps him from me! See, Araspes! look!
See the charm'd lions; mark their mild demeanour.
Araspes, mark! they have no pow'r to hurt him!
See how they hang their heads and smooth their
fierceness,
At his mild aspect.

ARASPES.

Who that sees this sight,
Who that in after-times shall hear this told,
Can doubt if Daniel's God be God indeed?

DARIUS.

None, none, Araspes!

ARASPES.

Ah, he comes! he comes!

Enter DANIEL, followed by Multitudes.

DANIEL.

Hail, great Darius!

DARIUS.

Dost thou live indeed?

And live unhurt?

ARASPES.

Oh, miracle of joy!

DARIUS.

I scarce can trust my eyes! How didst thou 'scape?

DANIEL.

That bright and glorious Being who vouchsaf'd
Presence divine, when the three martyr'd brothers
Essay'd the cauldron's flame, supported me!
E'en in the furious lions' dreadful den,
The prisoner of hope, even there I turn'd
To the strong hold, the bulwark of my strength,
Ready to hear, and mighty to redeem.

DARIUS (*to ARASPES*).

Where is Pharnaces? Take the hoary traitor!
Take too Soranus, and the chief abettors
Of this dire edict; let not one escape,
The punishment their deep-laid hate devis'd
For holy Daniel, on their heads shall fall
With tenfold vengeance. To the lions' den
I doom his vile accusers! All their wives,
Their children too, shall share one common fate!
Take care that none escape.—Go, good Araspes.

[*Araspes goes out.*]

DANIEL.

Not so, Darius!

Oh spare the guiltless; spare the guilty too!
Where sin is not, to punish were unjust;
And where sin is, O king, there fell remorse
Supplies the place of punishment!

DARIUS.

No more!

My word is past! Not one request, save this,
Shalt thou e'er make in vain. Approach, my friends:
Araspes has already spread the tale,
And see what crowds advance!

PEOPLE.

Long live Darius!

Long live great Daniel too, the people's friend!

DARIUS.

Draw near, my subjects. See this holy man!
Death hath no pow'r to harm him. Yon fell band
Of famish'd lions, soften'd at his sight,
Forgot their nature, and grew tame before him.
The mighty God protects his servants thus!
The righteous thus he rescues from the snare!
While Fraud's artificer himself shall fall
In the deep gulf his wily arts devise
To snare the innocent!

A COURTIER.

To the same den

Araspes bears Pharnaces and his friends.

Fall'n is their insolence! With prayers and tears,
And all the meanness of high-crested pride,
When adverse fortune frowns, they beg for life.
Araspes will not hear. "You heard not me,"
He cries, "when I for Daniel's life implor'd;
His God protected him! see now if yours
Will listen to your cries!"

DARIUS.

Now hear,
People and nations, languages and realms,
O'er whom I rule! Peace be within your walls,
That I may banish from the minds of men
The rash decree gone out; hear me resolve
To counteract its force by one more just.
In ev'ry kingdom of my wide-stretch'd realm,
From fair Chaldea to the extremest bound
Of northern Media, be my edict sent,
And this my statute known. My heralds haste,
And spread my royal mandate through the land,
That all my subjects bow the ready knee
To Daniel's God; for HE alone is LORD.
Let all adore, and tremble at his name,
Who sits in glory unapproachable
Above the heav'ns—above the heav'n of heav'ns!
His pow'r is everlasting; and HIS throne,
Founded in equity and truth, shall last
Beyond the bounded reign of time and space,
Through wide eternity! With HIS right arm
HE saves, and who opposes? HE defends,
And who shall injure? In the perilous den
HE rescued Daniel from the lion's mouth!

His common deeds are wonders ; all his works
One ever-during chain of miracles !

Enter ARASPES.

ARASPES.

All hail, O king ! Darius, live for ever !
May all thy foes be as Pharnaces is !

DARIUS.

Araspes, speak !

ARASPES.

Oh, let me spare the tale !
'Tis full of horror ! Dreadful was the sight !
The hungry lions, greedy for their prey,
Devour'd the wretched princes ere they reach'd
The bottom of the den.

DARIUS.

Now, now confess,
'Twas some superior hand restrain'd their rage
And tam'd their furious appetites.

PEOPLE.

'Tis true.
The God of Daniel is a mighty God !
HE saves and HE destroys.

ARASPES.

O friend ! O Daniel !
No wav'ring doubts can ever more disturb
My settled faith.

DANIEL.

To God be all the glory !

REFLECTIONS
OF
KING HEZEKIAH,
In his Sickness.



“Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die.”

ISAIAH XXXVIII.

REFLECTIONS
OF
KING HEZEKIAH,
In his Sickness.

WHAT! and no more?—Is this, my soul, said I,
My whole of being?—Must I surely die?
Be robb'd at once of health, of strength, of time,
Of youth's fair promise, and of pleasure's prime?
Shall I no more behold the face of morn,
The cheerful day-light, and the spring's return?
Must I the festive bow'r, the banquet leave,
For the dull chambers of the darksome grave?

Have I consider'd what it is to die?
In native dust with kindred worms to lie;
To sleep in cheerless cold neglect! to rot!
My body loath'd, my very name forgot!
Not one of all those parasites, who bend
The supple knee, their monarch to attend!
What, not one friend? No, not an hireling slave
Shall hail great HEZEKIAH in the grave.
Where's *he*, who falsely claim'd the name of *Great*:
Whose eye was terror, and whose frown was fate,
Who aw'd an hundred nations from the throne?
See where he lies, dumb, friendless, and alone!

Which grain of dust proclaims the noble birth?
Which is the royal particle of earth?
Where are the marks, the princely ensigns where?
Which is the slave, and which great David's heir?
Alas! the beggar's ashes are not known
From his, who lately sat on Israel's throne!

How stands my great account? My soul, survey
The debt ETERNAL JUSTICE bids thee pay!
Should I frail Memory's records strive to blot,
Will Heav'n's tremendous reck'ning be forgot?
Can I, alas, the awful volume tear?
Or rase one page of the dread register?

“*Prepare thy house, thy heart in order set:
Prepare the Judge of Heav'n and Earth to meet.*”
So spake the warning Prophet.—Awful words!
Which fearfully my troubled soul records.
Am I prepar'd? and *can* I meet my doom,
Nor shudder at the dreaded wrath to come?
Is all in order set, my house, my heart?
Does no besetting sin still claim a part?
No cherish'd error, loath to quit its place,
Obstruct within my soul the work of grace?
Did I each day for this great day prepare,
By righteous deeds, by sin-subduing pray'r?
Did I each night, each day's offence repent,
And each unholy thought and word lament?
Still have these ready hands the afflicted fed,
And minister'd to Want her daily bread?
The cause I knew not did I well explore?
Friend, advocate, and parent of the poor?
Did I, to gratify some sudden gust
Of thoughtless appetite, some impious lust

Of pleasure or of pow'r, such sums employ
As would have flush'd pale penury with joy ?
Did I in groves forbidden altars raise,
Or molten gods adore, or idols praise ?
Did my firm faith to Heav'n still point the way ?
Did charity to man my actions sway ?
Did meek-ey'd Patience all my steps attend ?
Did gen'rous Candour mark me for her friend ?
Did I unjustly seek to build my name
On the pil'd ruins of another's fame ?
Did I abhor, as hell, the insidious lie,
The low deceit, the unmanly calumny ?
Did my fix'd soul the impious wit detest ?
Did my firm virtue scorn the unhallow'd jest,
The sneer profane, and the poor ridicule
Of shallow Infidelity's dull school ?
Did I still live as born one day to die,
And view the eternal world with constant eye ?

If so I liv'd, if so I kept thy word,
In mercy view, in mercy hear me, Lord !
For oh ! how strict soe'er I kept thy law,
From mercy only all my hopes I draw ;
My holiest deeds *indulgence* will require ;
The best but to *forgiveness* will aspire ;
If thou my purest services regard,
'Twill be with pardon only, not reward.
How imperfection's stamp'd on all below !
How sin intrudes in all we say or do !
How late in all the insolence of health,
I charm'd the Assyrian* by my boast of wealth !

* This is anachronism. Hezekiah did not show his treasures to the Assyrian till after his recovery from his sickness.

How fondly with elab'rate pomp display'd
My glitt'ring treasures! with what triumph laid
My gold and gems before his dazzled eyes,
And found a rich reward in his surprise!
Oh, mean of soul! can wealth elate the heart,
Which of the man himself is not a part!
Oh, poverty of pride! Oh, foul disgrace!
Disgusted Reason, blushing, hides her face.
Mortal and proud! strange contradicting terms!
Pride for Death's victim, for the prey of worms!
Of all the wonders which the eventful life
Of man presents; of all the mental strife
Of warring passions; all the raging fires
Of furious appetites and mad desires,
Not one so strange appears as this alone,
That man is proud of what is not his own!

How short is human life! the very breath,
Which frames my words, accelerates my death.
Of this short life how large a portion's fled;
To what is gone I am already dead;
As dead to all my years and minutes past,
As I, to what remains, shall be at last.
Can I past miseries so far forget,
To view my vanish'd years with fond regret?
Can I again my worn-out fancy cheat?
Indulge fresh hope? solicit new deceit?
Of all the vanities weak man admires,
Which greatness gives, youth hopes, or pride desires;
Of these, my soul, which hast thou not enjoy'd!
With each, with all, thy sated powers are cloy'd.
What can I then expect from length of days?
More wealth, more wisdom, pleasure, health, or praise?

More pleasure! hope not that, deluded king!
For when did age increase of pleasure bring?
Is health, of years prolong'd the common boast?
And dear-earn'd fame, is it not cheaply lost?
More wisdom! that indeed were happiness;
That were a wish a king might well confess:
But when did Wisdom covet length of days?
Or seek its bliss in pleasure, wealth, or praise?
No:—Wisdom views with an indifferent eye
All finite joys, all blessings born to die.
The soul on earth is an immortal guest,
Compell'd to starve at an unreal feast:
A spark, which upward tends by Nature's force;
A stream, diverted from its parent source;
A drop, dis sever'd from the boundless sea;
A moment, parted from eternity;
A pilgrim, panting for the rest to come;
An exile, anxious for his native home.

Why should I ask my forfeit life to save?
Is Heav'n unjust which dooms me to the grave?
Was I with hope of endless days deceiv'd?
Or of lov'd life am I alone bereav'd?
Let all the great, the rich, the learn'd, the wise,
Let all the shades of Judah's monarchs rise,
And say, if genius, learning, empire, wealth,
Youth, beauty, virtue, strength, renown, or health,
Has once revers'd the immutable decree
On Adam pass'd, of man's mortality?
What—have these eyes ne'er seen the felon worm
The damask cheek devour, the finish'd form?
On the pale rose of blasted beauty feed,
And riot on the lip so lately red?

Where are our fathers? Where the illustrious line
 Of holy prophets, and of seers divine?
 Live they for ever? Do they shun the grave?
 Or when did Wisdom its professor save?
 When did the brave escape? When did the breath
 Of eloquence charm the dull ear of Death?
 When did the cunning argument avail,
 The polish'd period, or the varnish'd tale;
 The eye of lightning, or the soul of fire,
 Which thronging thousands crowded to admire?
 E'en while we praise the verse the poet dies;
 And silent as his lyre great David lies.
 Thou, blest Isaiah! who at God's command,
 Now speak'st repentance to a guilty land,
 Must die! as wise and good thou hadst not been,
 As Nebat's son, who taught the land to sin.

And shall I then be spar'd? Oh monstrous pride!
 Shall I escape, when Solomon has died?
 If all the worth of all the saints were vain—
 Peace, peace, my troubled soul, nor dare complain!
 LORD, I submit. Complete thy gracious will!
 For if thou slay me, I will trust thee still.
 Oh! be my will so swallow'd up in thine,
 That I may do THY will in doing *mine*.

THE END.



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